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The miscellaneous writings
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Samuel Agnew

THE

MISCELLANEOUS WRITINGS

OF THE LATE

MR WILLIAM BRAIDWOOD.

Mr WILLIAM BRAIDWOOD,

One of the Pastors of the

Original Baptist Church

Edinburgh.

THE

MISCELLANEOUS WRITINGS

OF THE LATE

MR WILLIAM BRAIDWOOD,

ONE OF THE

PASTORS OF THE ORIGINAL BAPTIST CHURCH, EDINBURGH.

NOW FIRST COLLECTED INTO A VOLUME.

WITH A MEMOIR OF HIS LIFE, MINISTRY, AND WRITINGS,
BY WILLIAM JONES, M.A.

EDINBURGH:
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N.B.—The articles marked thus * are now for the first time printed.

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INTRODUCTORY REMARKS.

The friends of the late Mr William Braidwood, one of the Pastors of the Original Baptist Church in Edinburgh, having resolved upon collecting his several scattered publications into a volume, applied to me to afford them what little assistance I could, in compiling a short Memoir of his Life and Ministry to accompany it; to which I readily gave my consent, having, at the moment, contemplated little more than the writing of a dozen pages. But I had no sooner entered upon the task assigned me, than I found the materials to expand and ramify under my hands; and that, to do the subject any thing like justice, a more detailed account would be necessary than either they or myself had anticipated. Mr Braidwood's publications arose almost wholly and entirely out of the peculiar circumstances of the churches with which he walked in fellowship, and were intended by him either to lead them forward in the good profession which they made of the faith of Christ, and establish them in the true grace of God, or to preserve them from the contaminating influence of the divers and strange doctrines that were propagated, from time to time, by men of corrupt minds. He was not one of those who wrote for want of something else to employ him, or to eke out a slender income for the support of his family; nor yet to acquire

fame and reputation as an author. With the exception of his "Three Discourses on Parental Duties," the reader will find nearly all his larger pieces to have a reference, either immediate or more remote, to the state of the churches in the Scotch Baptist denomination, at the time of writing them. But though I have occasionally touched upon matters connected with these churches in the course of the Memoir, this subject merits a more enlarged consideration than it has yet received from me, and that will, I hope, plead my apology for introducing in this place a few preliminary observations.

The principles on which the Scotch Baptist profession is established, are so radically different from what currently obtains in the religious world, that the subject cannot be too often or too prominently obtruded on the view of the public. Dissenters in general, both in Scotland and England, profess to take their stand on our Lord's good confession concerning his kingdom, as an economy spiritual and heavenly, and of course totally distinct from the kingdoms of this world. They can quote this maxim with the utmost fluency, when it is necessary to stop the mouths of the advocates of national establishments of Christianity, pertinaciously insisting that Christ is the only Head of the Church, the alone Lord, Lawgiver, and King in Zion, to whose authority, revealed either in express command or Apostolic example, they implicitly bow. The reader who has had an opportunity of attending their ordination services, and the openings of places of worship, cannot be ignorant of the truth of what has now been stated. And, in fact, so common and habitual has this language become among the Dissenting clergy, whether Baptists or Pædobaptists, that they persuade themselves, and would fain persuade others, that such is actually the case. But let any disinterested person, who has read his New Testament with a proper discrimination, only compare our modern Dissenting churches with those planted by the Apostles

of Christ in primitive times; and if he do not discern the difference which exists between them, in their constitution, order, worship, and discipline, he can have read his Bible to little profit indeed.

. Look at the materials of which our modern Dissenting churches are mostly composed, and compare them with those of the Apostolic churches. The latter consisted of persons gathered out of the world by means of the preaching of the doctrine of the cross, or of Jesus Christ and him crucified. They "heard, believed, and were baptised," in the name of the Son of the Highest, confessing their sins, and so were added to the churches. These churches had all one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one common hope of their calling, one God and Father who was over all, &c.; and they loved one another for the truth's sake which dwelt in each of them, even the doctrine which the Apostles preached concerning Christ and his salvation, which was the common centre of their hope and joy. But look now at our modern Dissenting churches, and examine them by this rule. In how many of them is the simple Apostolic doctrine, concerning the person and work of Christ, held forth; and what is the bond of their union? Persons are received to baptism, and afterwards into church-fellowship, not upon a confession of their faith in Jesus Christ as the true Messiah, and their hope of salvation through his death and resurrection, but upon the recitation of what is called their *experience*, in other words, how they became serious or religious; and with this, the "one faith and hope" of the Gospel has little to do. In general, the sum-total of this experience may be summed up in these few words—"Thus and thus I have felt; *and therefore I hope.*"

2. Look at the character and complexion of their leaders. In place of the Scriptural Elder, chosen from among his brethren by his possessing, in some good measure, the

qualifications pointed out by the holy Apostles, Paul and Peter, 1 Tim. iii., Titus i., and 1 Peter v., they, for the most part, consist of young men who have had an academical education, obtained a smattering of systematic theology, and a little human learning, which is generally regarded as a tolerable *succedaneum* for being "mighty in the Scriptures." The chief thing looked for is, their capability to collect a congregation, and "raise the interest," as the phrase goes; not to build up the disciples in the faith, and hope, and obedience of the Gospel; for that is one of the last things thought of. And then they must be supported as gentlemen, that they may not, *as did the Apostles and primitive Elders*, defile their hands by working at a trade, (Acts xx. 33—35,) "to minister to their own necessities" and those that depend upon them, even though an Apostle has furnished them with an example of so doing, in his own conduct! And,

3. Mark the change which has come over our modern congregations in another particular. When the Apostles, under the guidance and direction of the Holy Spirit, set in order the first churches, they ordained them *Elders* (a plurality) in every city, Titus i. 5, and in every church, Acts xiv. 23.; whereas in our day and country, except among a sect every where spoken against, the *one man system* has almost universally supplanted the order established by the wisdom of God. This is one of the *improvements* (!) which time and experience has introduced into the Scriptural order of the house of God. It is found more convenient to have "one minister" than several elders. He is, in almost every respect, a totally different character from the latter, whose praise was that they surpassed their brethren, not only in their ability to teach others, but also in the exercise of patience, self-denial, humility, meekness, gentleness, and conformity to the example of their Divine Master. The wisdom of God hath appointed that those

who are called to take the oversight of their brethren in the churches of the saints, should possess the qualifications now mentioned, in order that they may be examples to the flock in every Christian virtue. But is it so in our modern Dissenting churches? Alas, who ever thinks of making such traits of character, as those which I have now mentioned, prerequisites for the office of *their minister?* He may be inflated with pride, dogmatical, dictatorial, and self-willed; it can all be dispensed with, and overlooked, provided he can only make a flourishing harangue, collect a crowded audience, and *please the people!* And now,

4. Look at the change which has taken place in our modern Dissenting congregations as to their external order and social practices. The primitive churches, when "set in order, with their bishops and deacons," came together on every first-day of the week "to break bread," in commemoration of the dying love and rising power of their God and Saviour, Acts xx. 7. But our moderns, losing sight of the real design of the institution, and more intent upon cultivating what they call "the devout exercises of the heart," than of expressing their love of the Saviour and obedience to his command, finding that fits of affection are apt to grow cold on too frequent returns, have almost unanimously agreed to commemorate the Lord's death only once a month. Hence it has come to pass, that the first Sabbath in each month, being the day usually fixed upon for that purpose, has obtained the high-sounding appellation of "*the* ordinance-day." Where, now, is the authority of Christ in this innovation?

But what I have now referred to, is not the only innovation that has taken place in the instituted worship of God on the Lord's day among our modern Dissenters. No one can read the New Testament with understanding, and not perceive from it, that in conducting public worship, though the churches had

their rulers, overseers, and guides, yet that the duties of prayer and of teaching were not restricted to them, but common also to private brethren, on whom the glorified Head of the Church had conferred gifts for the edification of his mystical body; see 1 Cor. xiv., and Eph. iv. But where among the moderns shall we find these appointments of Christ's house attended to, as of Divine authority? And why are they not? The reason is obvious; the pride of the clergy would be hurt, the dignity of the priesthood insulted! To them it matters not that the wisdom of God has wisely and graciously instituted these things as means of cultivating and improving the gifts of the brethren, and fitting persons for the work of the ministry, that the churches of Christ may be supplied with pastors and teachers after his own heart, who should feed his flock with knowledge and understanding. They (vainly) imagine that they have discovered a more excellent way of supplying the churches with office-bearers, than that which the all-wise God has prescribed in his Holy Word; but it has manifestly been effected at the expense of secularizing, in no ordinary degree, the worship of the Most High, and preferring the traditions of men to the laws of the King of Zion.

I might proceed to other alterations and innovations in the instituted worship of the Apostolic churches; but enough has been said to prepare the reader for entering upon a perusal of the contents of this volume with understanding and profit. The Scotch Baptist Churches adhere tenaciously to the prescribed order of the worship of Christ's house, so far as their minds are enlightened into it, and, wherein they come short, it is their prayer that God would be graciously pleased to reveal even this unto them.

W. J.

September 1, 1838.

PRESBYTERIAN
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MEMOIR OF THE AUTHOR.

When the Elder of a Christian Church is removed by death, and especially if he have laboured long and acceptably in the Lord's vineyard, it is natural for those who were favoured with his ministry to cherish his memory, and, if possible, preserve a faithful record of their benefactor; but if, in addition to his personal services, he have contributed to enlighten the world by his writings, the wish to possess a complete collection of his printed works is not less natural. Both of these motives unite in the case of the subject of this Memoir. Mr Braidwood was blessed with talents and acquirements which in themselves were calculated to raise him above the ordinary standard of mankind; the grace of God bestowed upon him, laid the foundation of his call to the office of a public teacher and ruler in the house of God, during the long period of upwards of fifty years, in which he served God in the ministry of his Son; and while thus laudably occupied, we find him, from time to time, issuing, through the medium of the press, a variety of treatises, mostly dictated by the circumstances of the times in which his lot was cast, and more especially by the peculiar exigencies of the Church of God to which his labours were devoted. A collection of these into one volume became a *desideratum* among his surviving friends, and gave rise to the present publication, which it is hoped may, under the blessing of the great Head of the Church, confer a permanency on his labours, and extend their beneficial effects to future ages. But no sooner was the resolution adopted of carrying this object into effect, than the idea suggested itself of prefixing to the work some account of its estimable author; and there were important inducements to this. Mr Braidwood may be safely quoted as one of the best examples of the *Scriptural elder* which modern times can furnish. The late Dr Charles Stuart, a physician of considerable eminence in Edinburgh, when reviewing one of his minor productions in the *Quarterly Magazine*, edited by that gentleman, thus speaks of him:—"The author of this discourse is well known as a sensible man, and a worthy and respectable citizen of Edinburgh. For more than twenty years, he has also been known to religious persons as a minister of the gospel, although never trained by any long course of education 'prescribed and held as necessary for the useful and successful discharge of the Gospel ministry.' We question much,

however, if any of those so educated, has presented to the world a better specimen of useful preaching than these pages contain, or than may be seen in his former publications on 'Parental Duties,' and 'Purity of Communion.' If men will read this discourse with candour, they must allow, that however useful, proper, and sanctified, education undoubtedly may be, to improve the talents required in a pastor of a Christian Church, that yet it is not indispensably necessary. Here is a writer who can reason well—who can unfold the doctrines and duties of the Scriptures perspicuously—who can defend them with ability, and apply them with force—who never studied divinity (in the common sense of the phrase) for an hour."

This, now, is the discriminating point of view in which the character of Mr Braidwood presents itself to us as claiming our notice and regard; and the reader is requested not to lose sight of it, while he candidly peruses the following pages.

William Braidwood was a native of Edinburgh, born there on the 27th of February 1751. His father was a respectable tradesman, and, by religious profession, belonged to the Church of Scotland. He seems to have been held in much estimation for his Christian character, and filled the office of elder, or more properly deacon, in one of the churches of the City of Edinburgh. He also, for a number of years, gave his gratuitous services to the Orphan Hospital, as Treasurer of that Institution. At the usual time at which boys are generally put to some employment, he placed his son William as an apprentice with Mr Grant, an ironmonger, who was also an elder (deacon) in one of the city churches—a man highly respected for his decided piety and Christian principles. Of these, and of his spirituality of mind, a very favourable view is left us, in a small volume of Hymns and Poems, first published in 1784—a second edition of which was brought out in 1820, under the title of "Original Hymns and Poems, written by a private Christian for his own use." Of Mr Grant, the subject of this Memoir always spoke in the warmest terms of friendship and esteem; and, if the recollection of the present writer does not fail him, he also took a lively interest in the republication of this little volume, to which he contributed a short preface. At any rate, the writer has now before him the 7th volume of the "New Evangelical Magazine," (anno 1821,) from which he takes leave to lay before the reader an extract from a letter written by Mr Braidwood to himself, then editor of that periodical; he thus writes:—

"Permit me to introduce to the notice of your readers, the second edition of a small collection of 'Original Hymns and Poems, written by a private Christian for his own use,' 72 pages 18mo, printed at Edinburgh, and sold by Nisbet, London, price 1s. 6d. We seldom read any interesting publication without an earnest desire to know something of the author; and in this I shall endeavour, in some respects, to gratify those who may read with profit to themselves, this memorial of a worthy and much esteemed citizen of Edinburgh. It is now upwards of fifty years since I obtained

the privilege of taking a manuscript copy of the Hymns, which I most highly valued, particularly because I had reason to think, that in no other instance the same permission had then been given.

"The venerable author was a merchant in Edinburgh, where he resided all his lifetime. He uniformly sustained a most respectable character for probity, punctuality, and benevolence. He was repeatedly in the magistracy, and served in the offices of Bailie, Dean of Guild, and Treasurer, with much conscientious fidelity. And for those services, the city of Edinburgh was indebted, not to any thing congenial in his dispositions and habits, nor to a desire of pre-eminence or public fame, but solely to a conviction that it was his duty to do something for the good of his native city.

"He always shunned a public bustling life, and was best known in his private Christian character, in which his uniform, steady, and humble walk and conversation, shone conspicuously. He was extremely regular and methodical in parcelling out his time, not in his business only, but in all his other avocations. Though of a weakly constitution, and labouring under serious complaints during the greater part of his long life, it was his uniform practice to rise very early in the morning, in winter as well as in summer, and his morning hours were devoted to private study, meditation, and prayer. He occupied particular parts of each day in reading, and frequently amused and edified himself by composing poetical pieces, in which he took great delight. These were chiefly upon religious subjects, relative to the state of his own mind, or to that of his friends and correspondents. He was a constant hearer in the Tolbooth Church, and long in habits of endearing intimacy with many eminent Christians, with whom he is now associated in the mansions of the blessed, and joining with the redeemed company in their everlasting song of praise. Some of those were the following ministers, who are singled out because they are best known to the public—Mr Riccalton of Hobkirk, Mr Davidson of Braintree, Mr Plenderleath of Edinburgh, Mr Davidson of Galashiels, the famous George Whitfield, &c. His free and intimate correspondence with them, and their mutual Christian experiences, frequently afforded subjects for his poetical effusions, which, though they certainly will not procure him the reputation of an eminent poet, are yet sweet and melodious, full of solid Scriptural truth, and expressive of the breathings of a mind exercised to godliness—the deeply rooted principles of one who delighted not in mere theory, but in that which forms the substantial food of the immortal soul."

Mr Braidwood appears to have been brought to the knowledge of the truth at a very early age. This may not unreasonably be inferred from the circumstance that, when he was only about eighteen years of age, at which time, having lost his father, he occupied the position of the head of the family, in conducting the worship which had been regularly observed by his deceased parent. We are farther told that when his mind

was first awakened to a sense of his sinfulness and guilt in the sight of God, he was in a state of great distress, which was much increased by the dark and perplexing views of faith which were then taught. And, as he himself expressed it, he should have sunk into despair, had not the Lord the Spirit mercifully interposed, shining into his mind, and enabling him to lay hold of some simple passages of his holy word, which served as a stay to his thoughts and an anchor to his troubled mind, such as "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that *whosoever believeth* in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life; for God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved;" and "it is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." But even after he obtained some relief to his guilty conscience by believing the record which God hath given of his Son, he had no distinct views of the nature of the Kingdom of Christ, as an economy wholly spiritual and incapable of amalgamation with political institutions or the power of the civil magistrate, for he attached himself to the national church, in the communion of which he continued for some time.

At that period a practice was common in those churches, particularly where there were Evangelical ministers, for the more serious part of the congregation to meet together once a-week or oftener, in some private house, or other convenient place, for worship, reading the Scriptures, and exhortation. In these meetings all were expected to take a part, for none were admitted among them in whom they had not all the fullest confidence as to their Christian character, neither were any retained who did not walk consistently with the profession they made of the name of Jesus. These societies are known by the name of "Fellowship Meetings." With one of these meetings Mr Braidwood was very early connected, the leading person in which was a Mr Peebles, the teacher in the Orphan Hospital, at that time a well-known character in the religious world, and greatly esteemed for his sterling worth and primitive simplicity of manners. It was no doubt in this meeting that Mr Braidwood was first called to exercise those talents with which the great Head of the Church had endowed him, and designed that he should occupy in a far more important sphere. How far these little societies served to direct his mind to the New Testament order of Christian worship and ordinances, cannot now be ascertained; although it is not improbable that such was their effect, as they exhibited some of the most striking features of a Church of Christ, namely, in the affectionate intercourse which was maintained among the members, and in their watching over one another in love. For if any of their number should seem to slacken in their Christian course, they dealt faithfully with them, and in the event of not succeeding in their endeavours to bring them to a proper state of mind, such persons were no longer considered as belonging to their number.

But whatever influence these things might have upon his mind, it is cer-

tain he was not long in finding out the Anti-Christian nature of the connexion he had formed, and of all national establishments of religion. He consequently withdrew, and joined himself to a Congregational church in Edinburgh, which had been formed there some time previous to 1773, and of which Mr Robert Carmichael, and Mr John M'Lean, cloth merchant in Edinburgh, were appointed pastors or elders.

The precise age of Mr Braidwood when he united with this second class of Independents—for the Glasites took the precedency in separating from the National Church—cannot be exactly ascertained, but he must have been young. And with them he had been comparatively but a short time, when he was called to take part in the pastoral office, previous to the year 1778, in conjunction with Robert Cook, a person of considerable natural talents, who retained the appointment till his death. Under their joint care and labour, this church appears to have prospered for several years, as a Congregational church, and a number of individuals seceded from the Establishment and cast in their lot among them.

About this time, however, the question respecting the proper subjects and mode of baptism began to be mooted in Scotland. Mr Archibald M'Lean had answered Mr John Glas's Dissertation on Infant Baptism, and given the *quietus* to that party. In 1776, he also published his Defence of Believers' Baptism, in answer to an anonymous pamphlet which had appeared at Glasgow, and this produced a considerable sensation. Enquiry and discussion were now general amongst all classes of the religious community; and the result was, a number of the members of the church under the care of Messrs W. Braidwood and *John* M'Lean, left them, in order that they might obey the Saviour's command in being baptised on a personal profession of their faith in the Son of God, and these joined themselves to the Baptist church under the pastoral charge of Mr Archibald M'Lean. This took place about the close of the year 1777, and they were about thirty in number, but Mr Braidwood was not one of them. He continued his office as elder, and his connexion with that Pædobaptist church till March 1778, when he left them, much to their grief, and was baptised, and added to the church of which Mr Archibald M'Lean was pastor, having then just completed his 27th year.

The body of which Mr Braidwood was now a member, following out the plan of the Apostolic churches, afforded abundant scope for the exercise of the gifts of the private brethren in exhortation and prayer, &c., and consequently he had here an opportunity of ministering to the edification of his Christian brethren, in the way of teaching and admonishing them, "speaking the truth in love." Nor was the church long in finding out the value of his gifts, or appreciating their excellence; on the contrary, they held them in such estimation, that, connecting them with his personal character, he was called unanimously by his brethren, about the close of the same year, to take part with Mr M'Lean in the eldership, and was accordingly ordained as his colleague, by fasting and prayer, early in the

year 1779. In this situation he laboured for nearly fifty years with unwearied assiduity and diligence, not only with the highest honour to himself, but advantage to the church.

When Mr Braidwood had sustained the pastoral office, as the colleague of Mr M'Lean, for about the space of seven or eight years, he ventured to appear before the public in the capacity of an author, though his timidity and diffidence induced him to withhold his name. The subject of his pamphlet was, "A Discourse on the Duty of Mutual Exhortation in the Churches of Christ, by one of the Pastors of the Baptist Church at Edinburgh." Previous to the delivery and publication of this Discourse, that branch of public worship, which in the apostolic churches evidently presented a conspicuous feature, had been thrust into a corner, by the Congregational churches in Scotland, both Baptist and Pædobaptist. The latter, with whom the primitive church order and discipline was revived in that country, were in the practice of allotting a short portion of time to this exercise in the afternoon of the Lord's Day, immediately after the taking of the Lord's Supper, which I believe is still their practice; and hitherto the Baptist church under the supervision of Messrs M'Lean, Braidwood, and Inglis, had followed their example. But upon revising their plan of public worship, it appeared to them that a duty of so much importance was entitled to a greater prominency than was now given to it in their order of worship, and it was determined to bring it forward immediately after the reading of the Holy Scriptures on the morning of the Lord's Day, to which practice they still adhere, as do most of the churches in their connexion.

We need not a more convincing proof of the little regard which our modern Dissenting churches, in England, pay to the apostolic order of the House of God, than their total neglect of this institution. Instead of "hearing what the Spirit saith unto the Churches" regarding this matter, they seem to have agreed, one and all, to turn a deaf ear to it, vainly imagining, that they have found out a more excellent way! This has been not unaptly designated "the one man system." It consists in hiring an individual who, generally speaking, has been trained up at an academy or college, to conduct the public services of the Lord's Day, and who occupies nearly the whole of the time allotted for the services, in prayer, reading the Scriptures, and preaching, to the utter exclusion of whatever gifts the exalted Head of the Church may have conferred upon the body. Now, any one that reads the New Testament with attention, may at once perceive that this is a total departure from the order of worship instituted by the inspired apostles in the name of the ascended Saviour, in the primitive churches. But it is, unhappily, not the only instance in which such departure is visible. This, however, is not the place for going at large into that subject. When the Scotch Baptist churches commenced their profession, they took the New Testament in their hands, determined to examine, and find out the order of worship prescribed by the King of Zion,

and exemplified by the churches which were first in Judea, tracing out the footsteps of the flock, and, according to the light afforded them, regulating all their affairs conformably to that Divine standard.

Mr Braidwood has insisted but sparingly in this Discourse on the subject-matter of exhortation in the churches, nor has he gone into it controversially, but has confined himself chiefly to the manner of discharging the duty. He considered it unnecessary, he tells us, to establish the point, that it is the duty and privilege of brethren in Christian Churches to exhort one another, not only in private, but also when publicly assembled together; and the reason which he assigns for this is, that "those who will not be satisfied with a plain injunction, such as that contained in Heb. x. 25, 'Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together, but exhort one another,' will hardly be convinced by any argument, however plain, forcible, and conclusive." And, in reference to his reason for dwelling mostly throughout his Discourse on the *manner* of exhorting, he adds, that it was not from any idea that our manner of speech is of greater importance than the truths we declare, or the duties we enjoin, but because to him it appeared that much more depends on our manner of addressing one another in relation to the things of God, than is generally imagined; and because this fact had been generally overlooked by many Congregational churches, not a few of whom entertain a principle directly the reverse.

In this, his first essay as an author, Mr Braidwood gave a favourable specimen of his ability to instruct through the medium of the press, nor can any candid person peruse his Discourse without perceiving in it the germ of excellence, the traces of an original thinker, a sound and discriminating judgment, deep reverence for the Word of God, and the happy talent of expressing his meaning with correctness, perspicuity, and force—qualities of great importance, but of rare occurrence in a theological writer. The rules which he lays down for conducting the manner of exhortation, are few and simple, but they are such as must commend themselves to every thinking mind. I will here recapitulate them, without going into their illustrations. "Let all you say be directed to some end; never speak in a vague, loose, and unmeaning way. Speak the Word of God with solemnity and reverence. Speak the Word of God with humility. Exhort with sincerity and simplicity. Exhort with affection, fervour, and zeal." His remarks, also, on the distinction between exhortation and preaching, evince the soundness of his judgment; and it is much to be lamented that they are not more attended to in the churches which make conscience of attending to this duty. I will quote the passage:—

"Though you are earnestly entreated, in the following pages, to exercise any gifts which the Lord hath conferred upon you, for the edification of your brethren, it is far from my intention to make you consider yourselves as *teachers*. This would be to affirm that all are teachers, which is peremptorily denied by the Apostle Paul, 1 Cor. xii. 29; and that a society of Christians may lawfully be many masters, or teachers, opposite to

an express injunction of the Apostle James, ch. iii. 1. It would confound the distinction between teachers and taught, which is every where preserved in the Word of God, and must, in the nature of the thing, exist. It would confer upon all who have any gifts for speaking, that authority, rule, and presidency, which is always connected with teaching, and belongs only to those who are appointed by the churches of Christ to the *office* of teachers. While, therefore, we give full scope to the modest, humble, and zealous exercise of every gift in its proper place, agreeably to that beautiful representation of the body of Christ, 1 Cor. xii., we maintain as firmly the Lord's appointment of pastors and teachers, who have the oversight of the flock, and think it highly necessary to check the pride of those who would take this office at their own hand, without the suffrage of their brethren, or even aspire at the exercise of gifts which they do not really possess. Neither is it our opinion that all are qualified for exhorting one another, as private brethren in the church. We are persuaded that the Lord hath bestowed talents of this kind upon some, and withheld them from others. But it has seldom been necessary to prohibit any of this last description from coming forward in a public manner, and thus to step out of the place assigned them in the body; we need rather to encourage than to restrict."

Twenty years after the publication of this masterly discourse, Mr Braidwood was called to resume the same subject, and even to defend the practice of public exhortation by private brethren in the meetings of the church on the Lord's day, as an institution of apostolic authority. It had been impugned by several writers both in England and Scotland; nor need we marvel greatly at this. Attempts were made in England to introduce it into churches unscripturally gathered, and formed on the old plan, with one minister or elder; and, as might be expected, the pride of the clergy took fire, and some have been known even to quit their station rather than submit to it! "They would have no speaking in the church but by themselves." Our author's strictures, however, were, in the present instance, confined to a defence of the institution against some perverse things which had been published by Mr Greville Ewing of Glasgow, in a volume published by the latter, under the title of "An Attempt towards a Statement of the Doctrine of Scripture, on some disputed points respecting the Constitution of the Church of Christ." Mr Ewing, indeed, did not extend his opposition so far as to scout the practice altogether; he was ready to admit the brethren to exhort one another in the week-day meetings of the church, but was extremely averse to it on the Lord's day; and there is scarcely any part of the New Testament, upon which the practice can be founded, which he did not controvert, and explain in another way. This apparent perversion of the Scriptures from their original design, induced Mr Braidwood to examine his positions and test his arguments, which he has done in a very summary and convincing manner.* I quote a few sentences:—

* See Pp. 262—268 of this Volume.

"I proceed to justify public speaking in the churches by all who are possessed of useful gifts, requesting I may be considered as extending the obligation no farther. A man who has gifts may be unconscious of it, or may excuse his negligence, or his timidity, by professing that he is not qualified in this way to edify his brethren. But no man is called to occupy talents which he does not really possess.

"It would seem, from Acts xiii. 15, that exhortation by those who sustained no official character, was a common thing in the Jewish synagogues, after reading the Law and the Prophets; for the rulers of the synagogue sent to Paul and Barnabas, saying, 'Men and brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on.' And any one who is willing to take matters as they stand in the New Testament, may easily perceive that the same practice was instituted and followed in the churches of Christ. Their union in the truth; their desire of building up themselves and one another in their most holy faith; the necessity of men being thus trained to become teachers; and the impossibility of otherwise knowing who were capable to feed the flock of God;—all these naturally led the first Christians to the practice of exhorting one another, and demonstrate to us the propriety and usefulness of that duty.

"This duty is expressly commanded, in connexion with holding fast our profession, and provoking one another to love and to good works, Heb. x. 25, 'Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.' They were not to forsake the public assemblies or church-meetings, especially on the Lord's day, as some had done. And what was to be their employment when assembled? The answer is, 'Exhorting one another,' under a deep impression of the danger which awaited them; for 'the great and terrible day of the Lord,' when Jerusalem was to be destroyed, 'was approaching.' They saw it drawing nigh. Both their assembling themselves, therefore, and their exhorting one another, are here recommended as antidotes against apostasy, and as God's appointed means for strengthening their faith, and leading them to the sure ground of everlasting consolation, amidst all the calamities which could befall them.

"Even this express authority Mr Ewing has attempted to set aside, alleging that the Apostle only requires brethren to exhort one another in private to attend church-meetings; and for this he produces Newcome's translation: 'Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is, but exhorting to it.' If no church had ever allowed private brethren to supersede the labours of the bishop for half-an-hour at any of their public meetings, should we ever have heard of such a translation? The commandment to exhort is a general one; and no person would think of restricting it to one subject, unless he had a favourite point to gain, and that seems to be, the honour of the officiating clergyman.

"Mr Ewing brings forward a great many prudential reasons for declining mutual exhortation on the first day of the week. But these, notwithstanding the ingenuity and acuteness displayed in them, require no answer; because, although Divine ordinances may be abused, yet they are all salutary and useful in the highest degree when observed in the true spirit of Christianity, which destroys every selfish principle, and excludes all that is inconsistent with love to God and to the brethren. And were some public teachers more under the influence of this spirit, they would not think themselves affronted or displaced when the truth is spoken in love by the body of which they are members, if it be a body capable of such an exercise; and if it be totally incapable of this, whatever may be its just description, it is not the body of Christ, although some of its members may belong to the general assembly and church of the first-born."

I cannot dismiss this subject, without making one quotation more from this masterly confutation:—

"Mr Ewing would do well to consider, that his plan in favour of one man performing the whole of the duty on the Lord's day, in every church, has led him not only to do injustice to particular texts of Scripture, but to oppose the whole scope and spirit of the New Testament regarding Christian fellowship; for the sacred writers uniformly declare that the body of Christ consists of many members—that not one, but a variety of these, are the governing members—and that the church in general contribute their share towards the welfare and prosperity of the body. Indeed, no other system accords with the nature of their connexion as redeemed sinners, 'glorying in nothing save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which they are crucified to the world, and loving one another as Christ hath loved them.' To affirm that the want of the personal appearance of Apostles, Prophets, and Evangelists, is better supplied by a single person learned in all the wisdom of the universities, and in many cases loving to have the pre-eminence, than by such a variety of gifts as the Lord is now pleased to bestow, seems equally inconsistent with humility, and with every rational view of that which tends to edification. In the great and infallible standard of the churches, we never read of the bishop, or the office-bearer of any description, except when the Apostle states the qualifications which every bishop ought to possess. Of this Mr Ewing has taken an undue advantage; for he might as well have argued that the Apostle describes one universal bishop, as that he restricts the number to one in any congregation, after he had commanded elders to be ordained in every city. That which ought still more to convince him, is the weighty consideration, that while no president of a church is, in any part of the sacred Scriptures, termed the pastor or the bishop, these are designations appropriated to our gracious and Almighty Lord, THE SHEPHERD AND BISHOP OF OUR SOULS."

Mr Braidwood's second publication, and by far the most popular of all his productions through the medium of the press, was entitled, "Parental Duties illustrated from the Word of God, in Three Discourses," Edin-

burgh, 1792. This excellent treatise, after going through three or four editions, mostly circulated in Scotland, has recently been taken up by the Religious Tract Society in the metropolis of England, by whom it will be circulated to an amazing extent; and it is in all respects worthy of it. The sound good sense and excellent practical advice which characterise every page, has justly entitled it to the rank of a standard book on the subject. In proof of this, I may be allowed to mention a fact which fell under my own knowledge, and for the truth of which I can vouch. Some years ago, a copy of it fell accidentally into the hands of a very respectable and well-informed Baptist minister,* who knew nothing of the author personally, and therefore could not be influenced by motives of partiality in his favourable judgment of it. But he read it, and was exceedingly struck with its originality and merit; and from that time it became the topic of eulogy with him. He recommended it to all the heads of families within the circle of his acquaintance, and writing to others at a distance, he ventured to give his decided opinion of it in the following terse and emphatic manner:—"It as far excels all that I have hitherto read on the same subject, as a diamond surpasses a pebble." And not much inferior to this seems to be the opinion of the Editor of the Evangelical Magazine, who, in a recent notice of the Tract Society edition of the book, tells his readers that "the work ought to find its way into the hands of every parent." †

It may be mentioned, as an important feature in this publication, that the author's views were not wholly theoretical. Doubtless he was indebted for the most valuable of them to the Holy Scriptures, of which he was a diligent student; and his eye was ever kept steadily fixed on them, as the "man of his counsel." But, in addition to this, he had the benefit of practical experience in the bringing up of his own offspring. He had a numerous family of children, most of whom were taken away during their minority; but two of his sons grew up to man's estate, and became members of the church under their father's pastoral care; and, in their case, he had an opportunity of witnessing the salutary effects of the rules and regulations which he recommends to other parents in this volume. One of those sons, indeed, fell a martyr to pulmonary consumption on the 25th of January 1803, an event which deeply affected the bereaved parent; and he drew up a narrative of his son's life, not with the remotest view to publication, but for the satisfaction of his own mind, and the benefit of others of the family who might wish to peruse it. This manuscript now lies before me; and were it not that I find in the preface a prohibition against "causing or permitting any part of it to be printed," I should gladly have laid before the reader a few interesting extracts. Under existing circumstances, however, I must forego that gratification. When this

* The late Mr Samuel Fisher of Norwich.

† Evangelical Magazine, No. 177. New Series, September 1837, p. 425.

young man's health began to decline, which was in the summer of 1802, his anxious parent withdrew him to the more genial climate of England, by which I was favoured with an opportunity—the only one I ever enjoyed—of a personal interview with either or both of them. It took place at Leeds, in Yorkshire, and there I passed a pleasant week with them. I find that Mr Braidwood has recorded this incident in the margin of his narrative; and as it forms no part of the prohibited pages, I beg permission to quote it, though it may subject me to the imputation of vanity from the censorious:—"We were refreshed by a visit from a much esteemed Christian brother, who came from Liverpool on purpose to see us."

Some of Mr Braidwood's own brethren have hesitated to accompany him in the whole of his remarks and observations touching the encouragements which Christian parents have to train up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. The reader will find the passage to which allusion is now made, in pages 77—88 of the present volume. He admits, in the most unqualified terms, the corruption of human nature, and the propensity there is in *every* son and daughter of Adam to go astray from the womb; but he denies that any are born with a bias to particular vices, (see p. 83,) and he resolves the whole into external circumstances, such as education, company, opportunities, temptations, &c.; and that any become riotous or unruly, *habitually* wicked and ungovernable, he resolves wholly into the parents' neglect. He cannot admit that one man is born more wicked than another, that is, with stronger propensities to sin; and the reason which he assigns is, that such assertion involves in it this necessary consequence, that God is the author of sin. But does not this objection equally militate against our admitting the corruption of human nature in any degree? It is no province of mine, however, to contest the point with Mr Braidwood; and I merely throw out the hint for the reader's consideration. The subject is a very difficult one, and what Mr Braidwood has said relating to it, merits serious attention.

Mr Braidwood's next publication was of a more elaborate cast. The subject is, "Purity of Christian Communion recommended as an Antidote against the Perils of the Latter Days; in Three Discourses; with an Appendix. No. I. On the Weekly Celebration of the Lord's Supper. No. II. On the Nature and Tendency of Human Standards in Religion." Pp. 72; 8vo, 1796.

The discourses are founded on 2 Tim. iii. 1—5, "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come," &c.—a passage evidently prophetical of the rise and reign of Antichrist. The publication owed its origin to the passing events of the day. The recent Revolution in France had occasioned a prodigious ferment in the minds of all classes of the community, but more especially among the professors of religion, many of whom calculated upon nothing less than the commencement of the millennial period. "The subjects treated of in this work," says the author, "have lately occupied the attention of Christians of various denominations,

in a more than usual degree; which induces the author to hope that it may be acceptable and useful to some who are beginning to free themselves from the shackles of human authority in matters of religion, and to search the Scriptures with unbiassed minds; and though it should meet with a very opposite reception from others who are wedded to human systems of divinity, or interested in their support, he will not be greatly disappointed. Such persons, and all who may be disposed, on whatever ground, to censure the doctrine contained in these discourses, are requested to observe, that it can only be refuted by the Word of God; because it totally disavows every other standard. Any candid person, therefore, who may attempt to disprove it, must reckon himself bound to show that it contradicts the doctrine of the New Testament, unless he fairly denies the Divine authority of that book. The author considers the cause in which he is engaged as the cause of the Most High, whatever imperfection there may be in this attempt to defend it; and to Him he commits this cause, in the assured confidence that it will at last prevail over all opposition; for 'the kingdoms of this world,' the far greater part of whom are at present Antichristian worshippers or Pagan idolaters, will 'become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever,' Rev. xi. 15."

After pointing out the danger of being mixed up in church-fellowship with false professors, Mr Braidwood takes a review of the corruptions of Christianity as introduced by the Man of Sin, and then enforces the precept, "From such turn away." Such is the substance of the first Discourse. In the second, he has furnished a very able illustration of the Kingdom of Christ, the subjects of which are regenerated, or born from above—such as believe the truth, and are led to love and obey it; he describes its immunities and privileges—the means of establishing, defending, and promoting its interests, all of which show it to be a spiritual economy, and radically different from the kingdoms of this world; and from this he convincingly shows that the subjects of this kingdom ought to separate themselves from the mass of the world in religious fellowship. The third Discourse is devoted to the object of illustrating the benefits resulting to the children of God from their union in the faith, hope, and love of the truth. The whole of the second and third Discourses are of the highest excellence, and, for richness of doctrinal sentiment, power of illustration, and persuasive eloquence, will challenge a competition with any thing on the same subject in the compass of our language.

In the Appendix to these three Sermons, the author has thrown in his thoughts on two important points, viz.—The weekly celebration of the Lord's Supper,—and, On the nature and tendency of human standards in religion. Though the former of these subjects is handled more fully in another of his publications, hereafter to be noticed; yet I cannot deny myself the pleasure of extracting a single page in this place, because it is

so well said, and comprises all that can be said to purpose in so compendious a way, that it cannot too often meet the reader's eye.

"There is no clearer example for keeping the first day of the week as the Christian Sabbath, than for observing the ordinance of the Lord's Supper on that day; and it will be admitted that the authority of the former chiefly depends on the approved example of the first Christians, which is recorded for our imitation. I do not mean the setting apart of one day in seven for the immediate service of God. The obligation of this duty is founded on the original sanctification of the seventh day, on which God rested from his work of creation, and on the fourth commandment of the moral law, delivered by Moses. The great and powerful motives that are presented to us in the Gospel, enforce the observance of *another day*, for which this additional reason is given, that Christ hath entered into his rest, having ceased from his own works as God did from his, Heb. iv. 3—11. But the disciples of Christ require satisfactory evidence, that the same authority by which the seventh-day Sabbath was appointed, and then abrogated as a part of the Jewish system, for in this view it was a shadow of things to come, Col. ii. 16, 17, now obliges them to sanctify *the Lord's day*, and to keep it holy. If the example of the first Christians, under the direction of the inspired Apostles, is sufficient for this purpose, why should not the example of their eating the Lord's Supper on that day be admitted as equally binding on the Churches of Christ? There is not, in the New Testament, any one specified instance of a church being assembled for Divine worship on the first day of the week, which did not meet for this, among other purposes, that they might commemorate the death of Christ in the ordinance of the Supper. That authority, therefore, which has distinguished one Christian Sabbath from another, and made some of them, in comparison of the rest, *high days*, cannot plead the Word of God for its foundation. Every Lord's day is a day of exultation and triumph to those who enjoy the hope of eternal life through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead; and it is fit, that on all such days they should commemorate, in the appointed way, the grand foundation of this blessed hope. Thus it is clearly established, that the Churches of Christ ought to keep the ordinance of the Lord's Supper every first day of the week; and it is remarkable that all the arguments which have been used against this practice, when they are duly considered, tend only to illustrate and confirm the obligations which would render this the indispensable duty of the people of God."

On the subject of "the tendency of human standards in religion," Mr Braidwood properly remarks, that "human standards are not merely useless; they are also hurtful and dangerous. The Word of God is not merely *a rule*, but THE ONLY RULE by which the sentiments, inclinations, and conduct of all men ought to be regulated, and by which they will be judged at the last day. It contains the most awful threatenings against

those who shall add to it, or take any thing away from it, Prov. xxx. 6, Rev. xxii. 18, 19; and far from delegating to any class of men a power to form additional standards, there are few things against which it more frequently cautions us, than the danger of following any rule but itself, or submitting to the authority of man in the things of God. Nay, it declares that many would be seduced from the faith by corrupt and deceitful teachers, who would arrogantly assume the power of making laws for Christ. Indeed, if it be admitted that we have a Divine revelation at all, it necessarily follows that no man or body of men, if they are not divinely inspired, whatever may be their gifts, their knowledge of the Scriptures, and their pretensions to sanctity, can be warranted in making any standard in addition to that which it contains; for it will be acknowledged by all whom I now address, that Divine revelation ceased with the apostles.

"It is pleaded by those who favour human confessions of faith, that they are founded on the Holy Scriptures, and are agreeable thereto. Nay, some of their standards maintain, while they are in the very act of establishing *another rule*, that 'the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, are *the only rule* of faith and manners!' The same formularies which require the assent of probationers, ministers, and elders, to this grand and incontrovertible truth, oblige them also to declare, that 'they sincerely own and believe *the whole doctrine* contained in the Confession of Faith, Larger and Shorter Catechisms, compiled by the Assembly of Divines that met at Westminster, to be founded on the Word of God;' and that 'they resolve, through Divine grace, firmly and constantly to adhere to it, and to assert, maintain, and defend it to the utmost of their power, against all errors and opinions contrary to it.' Could any words express a more unqualified assent to *a human rule* of faith and manners, or impose a more solemn obligation to maintain and defend it? Yet men of sound principles are not convinced that the whole of its doctrine is consonant to the Holy Scriptures. And, at any rate, the indecency of requiring from Christian teachers a solemn profession of their faith in the writings of fallible men, might easily be discerned by all who venerate Divine revelation, and pay a due respect to the rights of conscience.

"If any human standards agree entirely with the Word of God, it is evident that the same thing cannot be justly affirmed of the whole of them, for they do not perfectly correspond with one another; and all the ingenuity of man is incapable of making it appear that the leaders in this business are fully persuaded of the sufficiency of the Scriptures. If the Word of God be a perfect and infallible standard, it must for this very reason be THE EXCLUSIVE ONE; and when it is not really and consistently held as the only rule of faith and practice, it is impossible that it can be considered as completely sufficient, in all respects, for this purpose. Those who adopt *another rule* must undoubtedly reckon it deficient, either with respect to the matter which it contains, the order in which its doctrine is delivered, or the simplicity, clearness, and precision, with which it states that which

is necessary to regulate the faith and practice of Christians. So far as any person is satisfied with the Scriptures in all those particulars, in the same proportion will he doubt the propriety of human standards, unless he be resolved to maintain that it is needful to add something to *that which is perfect*, a position so absurd, that it would be an affront to the human understanding to offer any argument against it.

"It would require a volume to show the evils which arise from human standards of religion. The Reformers in the sixteenth century did a most essential service to mankind, when they were made the instruments in the hands of God of bringing the Scriptures to light, and publishing them in the different languages of the nations, after they had long been withheld by *the Man of Sin*. But they prevented the full effect of that light which might have been expected to proceed from the Word of God, by placing human standards of doctrine between it and the people; and their example has been hitherto faithfully imitated by Protestants of almost all denominations. These *uninspired traditions of the fathers*, are not, however, now held in such high veneration as they formerly were. The light of Divine truth is gradually dispelling the darkness and prejudices which they have been the means of perpetuating to this day; and all the exertions of their most zealous defenders, can only procure them a feeble assent. Sooner or later they must sink into oblivion; but THE WORD OF OUR GOD SHALL STAND FOR EVER," Isaiah xl. 8.

It is now pretty generally known, that for the last ten years of the preceding (the eighteenth) century, a considerable ferment possessed the minds of our countrymen of all classes on political subjects. Nor was that all; a spirit of insubordination was but too manifest, and in not a few instances a pointed resistance to the measures of Government prevailed. To counteract these evils, severe and sanguinary laws were enacted, which tended still more to inflame the public mind. It was this state of matters that induced Mr Braidwood, first to deliver in the church of which he was one of the pastors, and afterwards to publish, a Sermon on Rom. xiii. 1—8, "Let every soul be subject to the higher powers," &c. &c. The title of the pamphlet ran,—"Loyalty enforced by arguments which are founded upon just views of Civil Government as an ordinance of God, and essential to the happiness of mankind,—the substance of a Sermon preached in the Meeting-House, Richmond Court, Edinburgh, on Sabbath, August 4, 1799, to which is added, a Vindication of some Dissenting Congregations, who have been charged with disloyalty by the late General Assembly of the Church of Scotland." To the Sermon is prefixed the following Advertisement: "Although the duties which we owe to the HIGHER POWERS have been explained in many publications, the author of the following sermon does not recollect that he ever saw a Scriptural account, at any length, of the *reasons* why subjection to lawful authority is so frequently enjoined in the Word of God. The loyalty of many subjects proceeds

from causes which are merely *political.* But persons who are truly religious, will not be governed by such motives. The arguments which prevail with them, are those which ought to *affect the conscience,* and which are neither the offspring of worldly wisdom nor of blind enthusiasm. Such is the nature of the arguments proposed in this sermon."

Soon after it was issued from the press, a Review of it appeared in the *Edinburgh Quarterly Magazine,* from the pen of the late Dr Charles Stuart, of whom I have spoken in a preceding page, and who, after some prefatory remarks on the author, which I have formerly quoted, thus proceeds:—

"Amidst all the politico-religious sermons and essays, by the Established or Seceding clergymen, from the year 1790 to this date, we know not, (and we have looked at most of them,) that there is one better calculated, and few as well calculated, to suppress the spirit of sedition, and to sooth the murmurs of discontent with civil government, as this now before us. Every one who reads this performance, and enters into the sentiments of the author, must feel high estimation of the British Government, and sincere gratitude to God, on its account. He must have the love of innovation banished from his mind, if ever it prevailed there, and the desire of reform, in the way in which those who call themselves the Friends of the People, pursued it.

"Collective bodies cannot blush; but the individuals to whom the public voice has ascribed the fabricating and propagating the misrepresentations contained in *the Pastoral Admonition,* must feel a little sore if they should chance to peruse this discourse, or the appendix, which we have reprinted, p. 194—200. These gentlemen, however, will probably affect to despise this lay-preacher's lucubrations; but disinterested men, it is hoped, will attend to his discourse, and they will learn that the liberty claimed by Dissenters is no cloak for democracy or anarchy. The scope of this discourse is not merely vindication; it is to show that the passive obedience enjoined on Christians toward civil government, is not an arbitrary precept, but a wise and gracious injunction of Heaven, in which the happiness of men, and the welfare of Christ's Kingdom, are equally consulted and materially interested.

"He does not state this sentiment in connexion with 'the right divine of kings to govern wrong,' or with their hereditary and indefeisible title to despotic authority, or with any of the topics of flattery and servility, by which High-Churchmen, from Laud or Sacheverel, or their more modern followers, have exposed it to merited prejudice and indignation. He shows that government, though not any particular form of it, is the ordinance of God: that it is not only intended to convey blessings to mankind, but that this end of it is, in some degree, attained: that it is attained, not only in a high degree by our own Government, (upon the whole, the best upon earth,) but in some measure by every civil government, even the worst and most degenerate. These, and a great variety of collateral points, the

light of which is brought to bear upon his principal position with great clearness and effect, are well supported by the Word of God, and by sound reasoning. We would gladly give a specimen of his manner of writing; but the discourse itself is not a long one, and the space we can now allot to any thing but religious intelligence, is so small, that we rather entreat our readers to peruse it, and to judge for themselves.

"We cannot, however, conclude our notice of this exceilent discourse, without attending to a prejudice which we observe to prevail among some professors of religion, respecting these and similar subjects. Some such affect to call discourses of this kind preachings upon politics. They conceive that these are not to be treated by Christian ministers; and it has even been insinuated in print, that those who insist upon the duties of subjects, are influenced by prudential considerations, or other unworthy motives. This certainly is a very great mistake, and such language deserves severe reprehension. The Word of God dwells much, among other relative duties, on the duties of Christians to civil government, and no minister of Christ can be pure from the blood of all men, who shuns to declare either this or any part of his counsel. The seditious spirit of the present day, and the mistaken sentiments which prevail upon these heads among not a few, render this publication peculiarly seasonable; and we most earnestly recommend it to all Christians, but especially to those who are coming to see that the Kingdom of Jesus Christ is not of this world."

Four or five years afterwards, Mr Braidwood resumed his pen on a collateral branch of the same subject; but in which he found it necessary to embody so much of the doctrine of the preceding sermon, that it has not been deemed expedient to reprint it in the present collection of his pieces. The title of this second tract was somewhat lengthy, but I may as well quote it, as the pamphlet now lies before me:—

"Hints on the Lawfulness of Self-Defence, under the Limitations prescribed by the Christian Law; containing Remarks on 'the Answer of a Clergyman of the Church of England to some Passages in a Letter from the Bishop of Rochester to the Clergy, (in 1798,) upon the Lawfulness of Defensive War.' Printed by Darton and Harvey, London. "And an Attempt to Remove other Scruples, and to Show that Non-Resistance does not *always* promote Peace, and Accord with Mercy." By a Scotch Dissenter. Edinburgh, 1804. Pp. 52; 12mo.

A copy of this pamphlet being sent by some one to the Editor of the *Christian Observer*—one of the very first of our London periodicals—the following strictures upon it appeared in the Number for October of that year, and in them the reviewer has contrived to embody the substance of the whole pamphlet:—

"It has seldom fallen to our lot to review a Tract which has a fairer claim to praise than the anonymous pamphlet now under consideration. Its author, by whatever religious name he may be distinguished, shows

himself a loyal subject, an able reasoner, and a sound divine; and his 'Hints' bear evident marks of Christian candour and moderation, no less than of just reflection and acute discrimination.

"The question which he undertakes to discuss, is one that can only be decided by the authority of Scripture—and it is to Scripture that our author uniformly makes his appeal, while he combats the reasonings of those who are so far carried away with specious appearances of philanthropy, and of compassion towards enemies, as to maintain the unlawfulness, under the New Testament dispensation, of bearing arms on any pretence whatever; or of resisting, by violent means, the attack either of the invaders of their country, or of internal robbers and murderers. The advocates for this doctrine of non-resistance, are apt to make a distinction between the obligations of Christians and of men of the world, as if that might be lawful and necessary for the latter, which is forbidden in the former. This, however, is but a flimsy attempt to conceal the absurd consequences of their system: for such a distinction is wholly unwarranted by the Word of God. If any course of conduct be forbidden on account of its moral turpitude, which is what is alleged in the present instance, it must be forbidden universally. Every man to whom the Gospel is preached is obliged, by the authority of God, to believe and obey it. If, then, it be morally wrong in itself to kill a human being, whether in self-defence or in order to punish or prevent crimes, the Divine law must prohibit it in every instance; for, if we would not confound the distinctions between moral good and evil, we must acknowledge that that conduct which, in its present nature, is criminal, must be so in the case of unbelievers as well as of Christians. If, therefore, every attempt to defend ourselves or our country by violent means, is opposite to the merciful spirit of the Gospel, then no one has a right to defend himself, or to secure the peace of society by violent means; for no one is at liberty to oppose the Gospel either in word or deed.

"The *profession* of a soldier is unquestionably ill suited, in some respects, to religious persons; and *offensive* war involves, as must be allowed, a very high degree of criminality. But yet it may admit of clear proof on Scriptural principles that there are cases in which Christians, as well as others, may lawfully defend themselves against their enemies. Those who maintain the contrary position, have never produced any passage from the Word of God which expressly forbids resistance to the lawless attacks of invaders and plunderers. They argue chiefly from the nature of the Christian dispensation, which, they allege, requires Christians, not only when they are 'persecuted for righteousness' sake,' but upon all other occasions, to yield to those, and even to load them with favours, who come to enslave, to murder, and to exterminate. But can it be right thus to encourage plunderers in their sanguinary schemes?

"The expressions, 'resist not evil,' 'love your enemies,' &c., which are so frequently quoted to prove that self-defence is unlawful, require,

without doubt, that Christians should not use violent means for defending themselves against persecuting magistrates; and that they should never show a litigious or resentful spirit. But do they require us to permit our enemies, without resistance, to land upon our shores, to plunder and massacre us at pleasure, and even to violate our wives and daughters? or that, instead of meeting them with the bayonet, we should receive them with hospitality; 'feed them and give them drink, that we may heap coals of fire on their heads?' Suppose that the house of one who thus reasons were attacked by merciless robbers, would he use no means to prevent their irruption? Would he be an unresisting spectator of the murder of his wife, children, and aged parents, though he knew that it was in his power to save them, or would he think it his duty to show kindness to the ruffians in the very act of destruction?

"It is certainly a great mistake in such cases to imagine that one who resists or gives up to punishment the criminal aggressor, may not entertain towards him sentiments of kindness and forgiveness. In the case, for instance, of a French army attempting to land on our shores, it appears to us, that humanity and mercy, as well as justice, would approve of our resisting the attempt with all the power which God has given us. Such conduct would not only be no violation of Christian love; but, as we conceive, would be clearly required by the spirit of that precept which commands us to love our neighbour as ourselves. For, if it would be a dereliction of our duty to decline interfering to prevent the incendiary or the assassin from destroying the property, or taking the life of our neighbour, it would surely be a still more flagrant violation of our obligations as Christians, to refuse our aid for the purpose of preventing the general pillage, and the immense slaughter, to say nothing of other dreadful effects, which must attend a successful invasion. Hatred, malice, and revenge, indeed, are crimes which, in no case, admit of excuse; but to affirm that resistance to lawless violence partakes in itself of the nature of these crimes, would be to imply, that not only the profession of soldiers, but the different offices of all concerned in criminal prosecutions, are in their nature unlawful, and opposed to the spirit of the Gospel.

"It is worthy of remark, that those who argue for non-resistance, in all cases, do not entertain similar views with the Apostle Paul. He not only pleaded his privilege as a Roman citizen, in order to point out to his enemies the danger of maltreating him; but, on one occasion, he appealed to Cæsar. And, to go still farther, when his nephew detected a conspiracy against his life, did the Apostle Paul reckon it a crime to resist assassins? Or did he think the use of means inconsistent with dependence upon God? No, he sent his nephew to the chief captain, in the hope that measures would be taken to defeat the malice of his enemies. Nor was he disappointed. A powerful guard conducted him to Cæsarea; and had the confederated assassins attempted to execute their purpose, would not the Apostle's guards have drawn the sword in his defence?

"Those who attempt to prove that military service is in all cases, and in its own nature, contrary to the law of God, will find it difficult to evade the force of several passages in the New Testament, which evidently lead to an opposite conclusion. Referring our readers to a comment on these passages in our Number for July, Pp. 401 and 402, we would only remark, that the fair inference to be drawn from them, and it is an inference confirmed by the practice of Christians in the first ages, seems to be, that a soldier may be one who fears God; that his situation does not preclude him from glorifying God; and that, therefore, he is not bound to resign it as in itself an unlawful employment. A '*devout soldier*,' if military employment be unlawful, would be as absurd an epithet as a *devout robber, or a devout murderer*.

"But it has been alleged, that though civil rulers are required to defend their subjects from those among themselves who would injure them, or disturb the public peace; yet that they are never expressly enjoined in the New Testament to defend their country against a foreign enemy. But the former obligation *necessarily* involves the latter. It would be absurd to suppose, that because those who attempt to injure us are foreigners, they may, therefore, attack and plunder us with impunity. If the Apostle Paul could conscientiously apply to a Roman commander for protection against forty assassins, may not we lawfully desire that our rulers should use every exertion to defend us against one or two hundred thousand, who have resolved 'to cut us off from being a nation?'

"If such be the *duty* of rulers, and if, as Christians, we are bound to obey them *in all lawful cases*, then must we be ready at their call to assist in the defence of our country.

"It has likewise been argued, that war proceeds solely from the lusts of men, and is altogether opposed to the spirit of the Gospel. We freely admit that this is the case with respect to offensive wars, which, therefore, cannot be reprobated in too strong terms, as utterly inconsistent with Christianity, and the proper fruit of diabolical malice. We plead not for these. We plead only for the right of self-defence, and to this right we are more clearly entitled, in proportion as it can be made to appear, that we have no right to invade others. It is plain that, if all nations were to act merely on the defensive, there would be no war.

"In the present circumstances of this country, let it be remembered, the question is not whether we shall *make war* for the purpose of revenge or national aggrandizement, but whether we shall resist invaders. A peaceable man may be obliged to resist an assassin; but does he thereby encourage bloodshed? Or is he therefore chargeable with the same bad passions which influenced the attempt to murder him? And were he to deliver another person from the stroke of the assassin, even at the risk of his own life, what would be our opinion of that person who should endeavour to prove that such an action was opposite to the merciful spirit of the Gospel? Does, then, the Gospel forbid all mercy except towards the

enemies of the human race? Or is no pity due to those whom they threaten and oppress?

" ' The kingdom of Christ is not of this world,' is a text which some have frequently employed against the principle of self-defence. The kingdom of Christ is, indeed, heavenly and spiritual: and the subjects of that kingdom are bound to show that they are not of this world, by their being mainly occupied about obtaining eternal life; by their holding every temporal enjoyment, however lawful, in a subserviency to that end; by their freedom from anxious care about even the most necessary objects; by their moderation and humility in prosperous circumstances; by their cheerful resignation under adversity; by their ready forgiveness of their worst enemies; in short, by their fixed determination rather ' to suffer the loss of all things' than to sin against God. But are we, therefore, to conclude that Christians have nothing to do with the concerns of this life? The kingdom of heaven, indeed, is essentially different from the kingdoms of this world; it is erected and maintained by supernatural means; and its interests are, in no case, to be promoted or defended by worldly weapons. But though this is explicitly affirmed by our Saviour, it does not follow that self-defence is criminal. On the contrary, it seems to have been our Lord's intention to show, that his kingdom *could not be* of this world, because his servants were not permitted to use that violence in *his* defence which would be lawful with respect to the subjects of an earthly king. Certainly neither civil rulers, nor masters, nor parents, are bereaved of their authority by the law of Christ; and yet, our Lord forbids *his* servants to assume pre-eminence over one another *in his kingdom*. How then can it be denied that Christians have a different part to act in the Church and in the world; though in both they are to be governed by the rules of the Gospel? Rulers and magistrates, for example, must bear the sword, and use it ' for the punishment of evil doers.' But in Christ's kingdom, ' all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.' How could even such ' as in meekness are to instruct those who oppose themselves,' ' rule their own houses well,' without occasionally using violence? There appears no way of evading the force of this argument, but by affirming that some things may be *lawful* for worldly men, which are forbidden to the people of God. The absurdity of this supposition has been already shown; but even if it had not, will it be affirmed that Christians are forbidden to fulfil the duties of magistrates, masters, and fathers?

" It is an observable circumstance in all the *intemperate* writings which of late have issued from the press in favour of liberty, that their authors seem less concerned for the quiet and peaceable part of mankind, than for the lawless and criminal. They seldom demand a farther *liberty to do good*, which would indeed be absurd in this country; that liberty being unbounded. Their sole object, generally, is to obtain for the turbulent and unruly more *freedom to do evil*; while those who may suffer thereby

are little regarded. But what would be the effect of such a system were it reduced to practice? What but the general prevalence of plunder and violence, of anarchy and mischief? If any thing like government remained, it would be but the misrule of traitors and assassins; and the lawless, after having exterminated the generation of the righteous, would quarrel among themselves and depopulate the world. But he who ruleth in the earth, will never permit this unrestrained dominion of the Prince of Darkness—this complete establishment of his throne; however such evils may be inflicted for a season as signal marks of the Divine vengeance. To conclude, every good man must deprecate the reproach to which Christianity would be exposed, should its friends admit that the law of Christ obliges the oppressed, when they cannot escape, *always* to yield to their oppressors; that Christians are, *in every case*, forbidden to defend themselves by violent means; that magistrates, who fear God, must 'bear the sword in vain;' or that any man, however worldly, is warranted by Divine authority to act in opposition to the spirit of the Gospel, or to do that which would be criminal in the most serious professor of the Christian faith.

"The above is an imperfect sketch of the arguments employed by the anonymous author of this well-timed and judicious production, in support of the lawfulness of self-defence; and which we have been induced, by a sense of their importance, thus to analyze. We recommend the work itself, in an especial manner, to the perusal of such as still entertain doubts on this interesting subject; for we perfectly concur with our author in thinking, that, 'in the event of the people being armed *en masse*, it would be a lamentable circumstance if any of the fearers of God should expose themselves to a severe punishment for resisting the supreme authority of this country, while they cannot show that they are required to do any thing opposite to the will of God.'—(P. 9.)

"The work which has called forth this able reply we have not seen. It is stated to be the production of a clergyman of the Church of England. But this clergyman, we suppose, must have taken advantage of Mr Fellows' rule of interpretation, (see p. 491,) otherwise he would scarcely have so directly impugned one of those Articles, (the 37th,) which he must have solemnly subscribed"—*Christian Observer*, October 1804: Vol. iii. p. 611—615.

Towards the end of the last century and the beginning of the present, the Scotch Baptists rose rapidly in number both in Scotland and England. Churches were multiplied, and the profession was more generally known, by means of the writings of their elders, particularly Messrs M'Lean* and Braidwood, and also by those of Mr H. D. Inglis, who laboured with them

* The last edition of Mr M'Lean's works was published in 1823, six vols. 8vo, with a Memoir by Mr Wm. Jones of London.

in the eldership of the church for nearly twenty-two years.* Indeed, it has often been observed as a very remarkable occurrence in the course of Divine Providence, that these three estimable persons, so eminently qualified to fill the situation which they occupied in the church, should thus be brought together so as to form, from their varied gifts and attainments, one of the most complete presbyteries which we can well suppose. Their views of the doctrine of Christ were the same, as were also their understanding of the laws and ordinances of the kingdom of heaven, while they were united in the closest bonds of brotherly affection.

* As Mr Inglis stands so intimately connected with Mr Braidwood as one of his colleagues, and whose memory is still warmly cherished by his surviving Christian brethren, (although they are rapidly reducing in number,) it cannot fail to be interesting shortly to advert to some particulars regarding him.

At an early age he discovered great brilliancy of parts, which, as he advanced in years, were more fully developed, and gave promise that he should distinguish himself in some of the learned professions. This induced his father to form the resolution of training him for the bar, and accordingly he entered on a course of education preparatory to that object.

While he was engaged in prosecuting his studies in the legal profession, it pleased the Most High to awaken his mind to a deep concern regarding his state as a transgressor of the Divine law. His conscience, thus awakened to a sense of his guilt and danger, happily soon found some measure of relief and peace in believing the record which God hath given concerning his Son.

Not long after his mind had undergone this great change—which was strikingly apparent to all who had formerly known him—he became earnestly desirous of being a minister of the Gospel. With that view he commenced the study of divinity in the University of Edinburgh. But the Lord had other work for him than to be employed in building up any national establishment of religion, so that his connexion with the University, as a student of divinity, was of short continuance.

It was at this time that Mr Stuart, then minister of the parish of Cramond, and afterwards a physician in Edinburgh, was about to withdraw himself from the National Church upon principle, and who was eventually baptised and added to the church with Mr M'Lean. This gentleman was eminently serviceable in directing the mind of Mr Inglis to more clear and scriptural views, not only of the Gospel itself, but also of the nature of Christ's Kingdom, as taught by himself and his apostles. The light having poured in upon his mind, he relinquished all connexion with the Divinity-Hall and National Church, and united himself with the body of Independents, of which mention has been already made. But finding, on farther inquiry, that they were defective in their understanding of the ordinance of baptism, he withdrew from them, and in 1777 was baptised by Mr M'Lean, and added to the church of which he and Dr Walker, physician in Edinburgh, were then pastors.

In October 1784, he was, by the unanimous voice of the church, chosen to the pastoral office, in conjunction with Mr M'Lean and Mr Braidwood.

Having at a subsequent period resumed the study of the law, he passed as an advocate on the 22d February 1794.

Being a person of great energy of mind, and having his heart deeply imbued with the love of the truth, he not only discharged the duties of the pastoral office in a faithful, efficient, and engaging manner, but zealously preached the Gospel in various places of the country, and also in the more immediate vicinity of the city; while he likewise, in conjunction with his two colleagues, addressed the public more widely by means of

Mr Inglis was succeeded in the eldership by Mr William Peddie, who had been designed for the Secession connexion. He was baptised and added to the church, September 1794; and four years after the death of Mr Inglis, namely in 1810, was called to take part with Messrs M'Lean and Braidwood in the eldership. He is not known as an author, but he was a person of excellent character and gifts, highly esteemed and valued by the church while living, and deservedly lamented when cut off, in the midst of his days and of his usefulness, on the 23d of June 1830.

About the beginning of the present century, the two Messrs Haldane also became Baptists, an event that contributed not a little to draw the attention of the disciples of Christ to this much despised institution of the kingdom of heaven in different parts of Scotland.

It was about this time, also, that a considerable stir was made in Ireland. The writings of the Scottish Independents found their way into Trinity College, Dublin, where they fell into the hands of the late Mr John Walker, at that time one of the tutors in that seminary. Mr Walker was a clergyman holding what are termed Evangelical sentiments, and, from his talents and station, had attained to considerable popularity, as a proof of which, he had preached one of the anniversary sermons before the London Missionary Society; but his views were not strictly in accordance with the New Testament, for he had never understood the Scriptural import of our Lord's good confession before Pontius Pilate, concerning his kingdom, John xviii. 35. But no sooner had these writings gained his attention, than the fruits and effects became manifest. Mr Walker resigned his station in the College, laid aside his gown, abandoned his connexion with the Ecclesiastical Establishment, in which his prospects were most inviting, and cast his lot amongst the Dissenters, though he never connected himself with the Scotch Baptists, or in fact with any other sect or denomination, but raised a party of his own, and, by adopting one whimsical thing after another, sought, and persuaded himself that he found, sufficient reasons for keeping aloof from all of them. I am aware that these remarks will not be very palatable to such of his friends as may meet with them; but it would be an easy task to justify them, were I called upon to do so. It fell to my lot to have better occasions of knowing Mr Walker, and of watching his march of sentiment, than most others on this side the Channel. As respects the ordinance of baptism, few

the press. And perhaps nothing of the kind was ever more extensively circulated, than his interesting letters respecting the case of William Mills, a criminal who suffered death at Edinburgh on the 21st of September 1785, in which the doctrine of Divine grace is stated with great clearness, and strikingly exemplified in the case of this person. He also published other pieces, among which we find his discourse entitled, "A Call to the People of God to come out of Babylon." Thus was this zealous servant of Christ engaged when he was called to enter into the joy of his Lord, on the 12th of May 1806, in the 49th year of his age.

opinions can be more whimsical—I might say absurd—than those which he adopted. And better had it been if this were all; but to turn the administration of the ordinance of believers' baptism into burlesque, by describing it as "playing at Philip and the Eunuch," admits of no justification. But let this, however, pass—he is gone to give in his account before a higher tribunal!

Mr Walker's secession from the Establishment was followed or accompanied by that of several of the students placed under his tuition; and these, mostly, exchanging the clerical for that of the medical profession, or of law, now took him for their leader, and became members of churches formed upon a new plan, under the denomination of Separatists. I need not, in this place, detain the reader, by particularizing their distinguishing sentiments and practices; but it seemed necessary to advert to the subject, in order to explain to the reader the grounds and occasion of the next publication with which Mr Braidwood favoured the world. It is entitled, "Letters on a Variety of Subjects, relating chiefly to Christian Fellowship and Church Order;"—first printed in the year 1808.

One of the tenets maintained by the Separatists, and many others who chimed in with them on what is termed "The Marked Separation Scheme," is this, that we cannot recognise any persons as Christians who are not members of pure churches; and the question is put with no inconsiderable consequence—"How can we distinguish the people of God from the bulk of those Antichristian parties with whom they stand connected, while they remain in full communion with them? It is one thing to admit the melancholy truth, that some of God's people are held captive in spiritual Babylon; but it is another thing to assume the authority of pronouncing and owning any particular persons as such, while they remain in an Antichristian connexion?"

To this Mr Braidwood replies as follows:—"No Divine ordinance has been more corrupted, nor has there ever been contrived a more powerful engine for maintaining and perpetuating the influence of the Man of Sin in the nations called Christian, than that of introducing the infant seed of those nations into what they call the visible church, and thus making Christians of all who breathe! Yet Sandemanians, or at least some among them, although they are zealous advocates for infant baptism, carry the matter so far as to pronounce all who deny the doctrine, self-righteous, and ignorant of the Gospel! Is this a crime consistent with discipleship, only in one or two of those numerous classes into which the professing disciples of Christ are divided? Or is the profanation of the Lord's Supper a stronger evidence of a false profession of Christianity than the profanation of the ordinance of baptism?

"Now here is a wonderful thing, which may check every disposition to glorying in men—a class of people making the loudest possible cry against the delusions of Antichrist, yet giving countenance to his most

capital device for making whole nations false and nominal Christians, and unchristianizing all who follow an opposite practice! And some, while they condemn the baptism of the nations, and are incapable of perceiving one real Christian in spiritual Babylon, yet acknowledge as such those who contend earnestly for the corruption of a Divine ordinance, which perhaps, more than any thing else, supports the tottering throne of Antichrist! If one would be consistent in the principle with respect to visible Christianity, he ought to acknowledge none as true believers except those who are perfectly agreed with himself, both in doctrine and in practice. I am doubtful if many of us could stand to be tried by such a test. I suppose that many of us neglect some things which Jesus Christ hath commanded, and it becomes each of us narrowly to examine his own heart and conduct, and then we shall be more cautious of judging others."

Although the sentiments and practices of the Separatists come in for a considerable share of Mr Braidwood's notice in this volume, yet it is not entirely restricted to that class of professors. His animadversions embrace a wide range, and many of them are directed against certain opinions which were taken up and industriously propagated by some of the individuals who had recently joined the churches of the Scotch Baptists. The principal of these new doctrines are, that two or three believers constitute what the Scriptures call a church—that they are competent to do every thing without a pastor, elder, or official administrator, which they can do with one—that there is no work or function peculiar to the pastoral office—that the institution of the Lord's Supper is not to be confined to a church or organized body, nor to the administration of a pastor.

These were, in a great measure, novel opinions among the Scotch Baptists, as indeed they still are and ever have been among the great body of Protestant Dissenters both in England and Scotland. They are the product of rashness, inconsideration, and a zeal untempered by knowledge. A very moderate degree of reflection may suffice to convince any one, that when carried out in their legitimate consequences, they are subversive of all order in the House of God, tending to crumble the churches of Christ into twos and threes, and to nullify the office of elder or pastor, by making its duties competent to the private brethren. It is a virtual impeachment of the wisdom of the King of Zion, in instituting an office —the highest, too, in his Church—which may be dispensed with, according as times and circumstances require, and that without the slightest interruption of visible church order. Yet, strange as it may appear, this unscriptural, disorderly, and destructive principle was no sooner propounded, than it was hailed with avidity by Messrs Walker, Haldane, Ballantine, Carson, Dr Watt, and others, to the unsettling of churches, and the introduction of strife and debate, confusion and incalculable evil in many of the churches, which were rent by it into divisions and subdivisions.

It was happy for the Scotch Baptist churches, and for that at Edinburgh in particular, that the latter had for its overseers men of age and experience, who were competent to take a calm and comprehensive survey of this subject in all its bearings—to grapple with the theory, unravel the sophisms of its abettors, and put the churches on their guard against adopting so manifest an evil. Mr Braidwood was a person eminently qualified to do this; for, to a sagacious understanding and penetrating judgment, there was combined in him a singular calmness and self-possession. He could reason logically and powerfully—he could chase the subtle with persevering industry, without ever losing his temper in the controversy, whilst he brought every sentiment and practice to the test of Divine revelation. His treatise was very unpalatable to the abettors of the new theory, but they never attempted to controvert its principles, and it will go down to posterity a lasting monument of the author's love of order, and deference to the authority of Christ as legislator in his own kingdom.

Mr Braidwood then proceeds to describe the scriptural characteristics of the disciples of Christ, and to refute the position in question; and towards the close of the book, Mr Braidwood comes in contact with Mr Greville Ewing of Glasgow, who had recently issued from the press a volume on some of the subjects now taken up by Mr Braidwood. Mr Ewing is an advocate for what has been denominated "THE ONE MAN SYSTEM"—consequently, he impugns the necessity of a plurality of pastors in the same church—is opposed to the exhortations of the brethren during the public worship of the Lord's-day—and some other matters connected with church order. On this, Mr Braidwood, after quoting and commenting on Heb. x. 25, "Not forsaking the assembling of yourselves together, but exhorting one another," &c., proceeds thus:—"Even this express authority, Mr Ewing has attempted to set aside, alleging that the Apostle only requires brethren to exhort one another in private to attend church meetings, and for this he produces Newcome's translation, "Not forsaking the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is, but exhorting to it." If no church had ever allowed private brethren to supersede the labours of the bishop for half an hour at any of their public meetings, should we ever have heard of such a translation? The command to exhort is a general one, and no person would think of restricting it to one subject, unless he had a favourite point to gain, and that seems to be the honour of the officiating clergyman.

"Mr Ewing would do well to consider that his plan in favour of one man performing the whole of the public duty on the Lord's-day, in every church, has led him not only to do injustice to particular texts of Scripture, but to oppose the whole scope and spirit of the New Testament regarding Christian fellowship; for the sacred writers uniformly declare, that the body of Christ consists of many members; that not one, but a variety of these are the governing members; and that the Church in

general contribute their share towards the welfare and prosperity of the body. Indeed, no other system accords with the nature of their connexion, as redeemed sinners, 'glorying in nothing save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which they are crucified to the world; and loving one another as Christ hath loved them.'

"To affirm that the want of the personal appearance of apostles, prophets, and evangelists, is better supplied by a single person, learned in all the wisdom of the Universities, and in many cases loving to have the pre-eminence, than by such a variety of gifts as the Lord is now pleased to bestow, seems equally inconsistent with humility, and with every rational view of that which tends to edification. In the great charter and infallible standard of the churches, we never read of *the* bishop, or *the* office-bearer of any description, except when the Apostle states the qualifications which every bishop ought to possess. Of this Mr Ewing has taken an undue advantage; for he might as well have argued that the Apostle describes one universal bishop, as that he restricts the number to one congregation, after he had commanded elders to be ordained in every city."

Some years elapsed after this, before Mr Braidwood again appeared before the public as an author, if we except an occasional paper in some periodical. He had now quitted his shop and business as an ironmonger, and undertaken the management and supervision of the Caledonian Fire Office. In 1803, he was deprived of his youngest son Ebenezer, at the age of seventeen, an event which deeply affected the father; but of this I have already spoken.

Another painful bereavement came upon him in 1812, namely, the death of his excellent colleague, Mr Archibald M'Lean, which took place on the 21st December, in his eightieth year. In a circular which he drew up on the same day, addressed to the churches connected with that of Edinburgh, he thus expresses his feelings on the occasion:—

"It has been the will of God to deprive us of a most eminent teacher. That to depart and to be with Christ is to him unspeakable gain, and that it is our duty to submit to the will of God, cannot be doubted. But surely I may be permitted to bewail the loss of a servant of Christ, whose talents were so remarkably distinguished, and employed for many years in the service of his Master with unremitting constancy and perseverance, and whose conduct uniformly justified and adorned his profession. The stroke would not have been so severe, had he been disabled and laid aside for any considerable time, which usually happens at an advanced period of life. But his faculties were entire, and his bodily strength not much impaired till the deadly disease came suddenly upon him. Three days before that, he delivered a lecture with all his usual acuteness and accuracy, and nearly with as much spirit as he ever displayed in preaching the truth of God. I am now deprived of his friendship, his experience, his counsels, and the opportunities of instruction which I have long enjoyed, and have not suitably improved. What shall I say? The Lord liveth, and he is able to

qualify and send forth other labourers, though at present I can see no reason to expect any one equally qualified to edify and establish the Church of God. Pray for me, and the Church here, who are all deeply afflicted." In 1814, he was also deprived of his daughter Mrs Marr.

In 1816, Mr Braidwood published "Remarks on Dr Chalmers' Address to the inhabitants of Kilmany, and on his general sentiments relative to the Doctrine of Divine Grace; in Six Letters to a Friend."

Dr Chalmers is now so well known, and his talents so generally appreciated as a popular declaimer, that it is needless to expatiate on the subject in this place. When he first entered upon the Christian ministry, it was in the humble capacity of a parish priest or presbyter, in the obscure district of Kilmany, in the county of Fife, the population of which did not exceed 800, and, if report tells true, he was at that time so remote from preaching the Gospel, that his creed bordered on scepticism. In process of time, however, the light of Divine truth is said to have broke in upon his mind, and given an entire new turn to his preaching: and from this time his popularity rose apace. Adopting Calvinistic views, he boldly declaimed on the total corruption of all men, without exception, who are not converted by the power of God: he held forth the doctrine of free justification through the finished work of the Son of God, without the deeds of the law: he also contended that every one to whom the word of salvation is sent, is immediately called by the authority of God to believe the Gospel, and thus to obtain an interest in the Saviour, and all its inestimable blessings, without money and without price: he also contended that all who hear the Gospel are not only commanded to believe it, but are immediately called, at the same time, to purify their hearts and reform their conduct: and he further maintained that the practical influence of the truth on the hearts and lives of believers, is the means of strengthening and establishing their faith. These are tenets which enter deeply into the system of Christian doctrines, and all who understand and believe the primitive apostolic Gospel, will readily acknowledge their truth and appreciate their importance. They were admitted by Mr Braidwood, and formed the basis of his own preaching. What then, it will be said, could he object to in the preaching of Dr Chalmers, and what was the ground of his controversy with him? The following quotation from the first of Mr Braidwood's six letters, will furnish the reply:—

"I object merely against his calling upon any man to *prepare himself* for the faith of the Gospel by performing good works, or to make any exertion by which he may render himself more likely than others to attain the righteousness which is by faith. Far from admitting that good works pave the way for ultimately finding rest for the guilty conscience in the Lord Jesus Christ, I am fully persuaded that they who, under any pretence whatever, 'seek to attain justifying righteousness, as it were by the works of the law,' are in a less hopeful state than others."

Mr Braidwood very justly considered this preparatory righteousness as beclouding the doctrine of rich, free, and sovereign grace; and therefore

his zeal for the latter led him to expose its evil tendency, and warn his readers against it. "There are various methods of obscuring and darkening the revelation of the free mercy of God," says Mr B., "to lost sinners, through the propitiation of his beloved Son, all of them, less or more, savouring of the doctrine of the Pharisees. But the persons whom I have chiefly in view are those who, though they readily admit that there is no salvation without Christ, and maintain the pure doctrine of the Scriptures with respect to the infinite dignity of his person, the suitableness of his character and offices, and the perfection of his Divine atonement, yet render all this of no avail by pleading for the necessity of some good thing being done on the part of a sinner, before he can actually partake of the benefits which the Son of God hath purchased. According to their doctrine, no person can believe the testimony of God concerning Christ, and obtain forgiveness and be accepted, guilty as he stands; but he must have something in himself to distinguish him from his fellow-sinners, without which he can have no prospect of receiving a welcome, should he, as a lost sheep, think of returning to Jesus the Shepherd and Bishop of souls."

Throughout the whole series of his letters, Mr Braidwood appears, while writing them, to have entertained the most sanguine hopes that Dr Chalmers, on being shown the inconsistency of his doctrine with the true grace of God, would instantly abandon it, as though it were merely an error of judgment. Hence, we find him saying—"Notwithstanding unfavourable appearances, I hope better things of Dr Chalmers, because he does not seem to prohibit any one, on his first hearing the truth, from receiving, by faith, all the blessings of the everlasting Gospel. On the contrary, he frequently insists on the call of the Gospel being immediately addressed to all who hear it, and shows that he considers every person, without exception, as not merely warranted, but invited, besought, and commanded to believe to the saving of the soul. There are, however, several passages in the 'Address,' which seem expressly to limit the immediate call of the Gospel to those who possess distinguishing qualities, and then to throw an insurmountable bar in the way of all who 'have no hope, and are without God in the world.'" And then he quotes a strange sentence from the Doctor's Address, urging upon unbelievers works of righteousness in order to prepare them for the reception of the Gospel!

Mr Braidwood very convincingly shows how opposite all this is to the doctrine of the Apostles, and then throws in an apology, or something akin to it, for his opponent. "Dr Chalmers," says he, "must have some method, which I cannot perceive, of reconciling in his own mind the preparation for believing the Gospel, for which he contends, with the doctrine of Divine grace, and the absolute freeness of salvation through Jesus Christ alone, for which he also earnestly pleads. But his doctrine on this head, which I hope he will not long continue to preach, is more likely to persuade his hearers to begin or lengthen out a fruitless work of reformation, than to shut them up to the necessity of fleeing for immediate re-

fuge to lay hold on the hope which God hath set before them. And it is worthy of his most serious consideration, that death and judgment may overtake them, while they are only in a course of preparation for that, without which, they must perish for ever. In a matter of infinite concern, it is a tremendous thing to speak of years to a mortal being who knows not what a day or an hour may bring forth."

In opposition to Dr Chalmers' preparatory doctrine, Mr Braidwood adduces that of the Apostle Paul, in Romans, ix. 30–36, than which nothing could be more pertinent, or more full to his purpose. "The Gentiles, who followed not after righteousness, nevertheless had attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith. But Israel, who followed after the law of righteousness, had not attained to it; because they sought it not by faith, but, as it were, by the works of the law." And this leads him to suspect some confusion in the mind of Dr Chalmers respecting the way in which sinners obtain an interest in Christ.

"Multitudes of Christian teachers," he remarks, "have spoken and published the most excellent things concerning the person of Christ, as God manifest in the flesh, his mission and offices, the whole of his mediatory work, the freeness of the grace of God, which reigneth through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord; and in fine, every thing connected with the all-sufficiency, and the absolute security, of that foundation which God hath laid in Zion. But when they come to apply this doctrine to the consciences of awakened sinners, or sinners of any description, it is completely thrown into the shade by a confused, complex, and indecisive manner of stating in what way a poor dying sinner may be made an actual partaker of salvation and eternal glory; or by throwing insurmountable barriers in his way, conditions, qualifications, and pre-requisites of various kinds, which his conscience tells him he is incapable of performing; and which, if he could attain them all, would not bring him to the desired haven of rest." He adds, "with a view to aid their hearers in this preparatory work, some preachers inculcate chiefly mental exercises, relating to the extent of their convictions, the genuine nature of their repentance, the purifying of the inner man, and the great exertions which must be made to reach the promised good. Others dwell principally on reformation of external conduct; and, in many instances, a great deal has been said relative to a due concern about religion, without sufficiently expressing a definite object; the sincerity of wishes and strivings to obtain deliverance; the necessity of the new birth, representing this as having much dependence on their energetic labour; and the evidences of true conversion; while little comparatively has been spoken about the all-atoning sacrifice of the Son of God, as the alone foundation of a sinner's hope."

In this quotation, Mr Braidwood has presented us with a correct representation of the style of preaching which characterises, with a few exceptions, what is denominated the Evangelical party, both among the English and

Scotch Dissenters, and also the clergy of the Establishment. It is not less applicable to the preaching of Dr Chalmers than to others—a fact which Mr Braidwood has clearly demonstrated by the extracts he has produced from his "Address." He has also shown that the learned Doctor has not attempted to produce from the Scriptures any other example of his doctrine than that of the disciples of John the Baptist, and he has therefore endeavoured, in his second letter, to rectify the Doctor's mistaken view of that subject. He has sketched an outline of the economy of our Lord's forerunner under six or seven particulars (see p. 306–8) showing that John was a "burning and shining light"—that he preached the glad tidings of salvation, and "prepared the ways of Jehovah, (chiefly) by giving knowledge of salvation by the remission of their sins." He adds, that "a mere glance of the prophetic description of his work, and of the doctrine which he actually preached, is sufficient to convince an unprejudiced mind that the design of his ministry was to level all distinctions among men, and to cut up by the roots every disposition in their guilty hearts to seek reconciliation with God on the ground of what they had done, or might afterwards do, either avowedly to merit the Divine favour, or to put themselves into a more likely state for obtaining mercy.

"It is true, he (John) called men to repentance and reformation, as doth also the Bible from the beginning to the end. But what human being ever repented of his sins and forsook them, without believing the truth of God which brings salvation, relieves the guilty conscience, softens the obdurate heart, and purifies the soul? Or how is it possible to bring forth fruits meet for repentance, where there exists not that repentance which God requires and approves? There may be fruit of some kind, but it cannot be that fruit which John demanded. As well may you expect fruit from a lifeless tree as from the dead and carnal hearts of men; there must be a principle of life in the soul before any action can be truly good. The only human work which is well-pleasing in the sight of God, 'is the work of faith;' the only labour which he approves, is 'the labour of love.'" Mr Braidwood adds—"Natural means, or means which God hath appointed for bringing men to the faith, without which no person could be saved, must not be confounded with a laborious preparatory work of morality and devotion. It is, however, a cause of deep lamentation that this is done by multitudes of professing Christians. Could I hope to be the honoured though unworthy instrument of convincing Dr Chalmers, and of reaching an effectual caveat to others, and especially of directing to the cheering and all-discovering light of Divine truth some poor benighted souls who groan under the bondage of this doctrine, I should be truly happy. But with respect to stemming the tide of popular opinion, and changing the bias of the human heart, I am in complete despair. Indeed, the salutary effects of the Word of God, in a smaller degree, nay, in the smallest possible degree, can only be produced by the same power which created the world, and quickeneth those that are dead in sins."

It was not without just cause that Mr Braidwood expressed himself in this cautious style, regarding the success of his labours in this attempt to correct a popular error. Religious teachers, in general, are too much wedded to their own opinions, especially if those opinions can boast the sanction of great names, to listen to any thing which may be urged against them either from reason or revelation; and in the case of Dr Chalmers, he had the benefit of experience to convince him how little disposed the latter was to review his creed, or listen to the voice of remonstrance; for, having prepared his manuscript, Mr Braidwood felt desirous of submitting it to Dr Chalmers' inspection before he issued it from the press; and therefore, with a candour which did him infinite credit, he sent it to a friend in Glasgow,* where Dr Chalmers then resided, requesting him to wait upon the Doctor with it, and tender him the opportunity of reading and examining it before it went to the press. The great man, however, declined the offer—he barely took it into his hands—read a few lines—remarked to the messenger that it appeared to be very correctly written—then politely returned it to him—declining, however, to look any further into it!

Would it not appear, from the fact now mentioned, that the question with Dr Chalmers was, not so much "what"—as "who says it?" Mr Braidwood was not the good Doctor's peer—he was dignified with no academical honours—he was neither "Reverend" nor "Doctor"—but a lay teacher in an obscure sect—a sect every where spoken against; and though he might better understand the mysteries of the kingdom than any or all of those who were thus honoured, and, "through the wisdom given unto him," be able to teach them the way more perfectly—yet he might have recollected, and probably did recollect, where and of whom it is written, "Thou wast altogether born in sin, and dost thou teach us?"—"Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him? But this people, which knoweth not the law, are accursed." Rendered giddy by popular applause, Dr Chalmers and other great men of his caste have little or no ear to give to what the Spirit saith unto the churches. Numbers rule the fashion, and can keep one another in countenance as to any thing; while the truth of God, clothed in its native simplicity, destitute of all meretricious ornament, and having nothing to recommend it but its own majesty and power, gains attention from only here and there an obscure individual, overlooked and neglected by the noisy multitude. But I proceed.

I have already, in a former page, adverted to the unhappy disputes which arose among the Scotch Baptist churches in the early part of this century, on the question respecting a company of disciples communicating in the Lord's Supper, without the presence of an elder; and have also noticed the part which Mr Braidwood took in this controversy, by the publication of his small volume, entitled, "Letters on a variety of Subjects, relating

* The late Mr John Morison Duncan, from whose own lips I had the anecdote.

chiefly to Christian Fellowship and Church Order." It cannot reasonably be doubted that this treatise, and another written by his colleague, Mr Archibald M'Lean, soon afterwards, entitled, "Strictures on the Writings of Dr James Watt and others, &c.," tended greatly to check the progress of the new opinions which were at that time industriously propagated on the subject of church order. But a new question now arose out of these discussions, and that respected the extent of forbearance which the churches that stood firm to their first principles ought to exercise towards those societies that had departed from them, and were practising the plan of a few disciples taking the Lord's Supper, before they were organized as a church, or had an official administrator. Divisions having taken place among many of the churches in the denomination, the point now to be determined was, how those churches which stood firm ought to carry themselves towards those whom they considered to be walking disorderly? It must also be kept in mind, that a departure from the instituted order of the Lord's house paved the way for other aberrations, such as that of admitting unbaptised persons to the Lord's table; and this also became a bone of contention even among those who were agreed to forbear the former practice. A clamour of no ordinary description was raised against those churches which, standing fast to their first principles, were determined to have no fellowship with such as they considered to be walking contrary to Apostolic rule and primitive example, so far as respected the presence of an elder as necessary to the orderly administration of the Lord's Supper. But when these abettors of disorder began to be pressed on the point of carrying out their own principle of forbearance to its legitimate consequences, many of them loudly demurred, and were as strong in their opposition to forbearing the second practice, as those whom they had departed from were against forbearing, themselves.

It was at this time that a pamphlet appeared from the pen of a Baptist minister in Edinburgh, under the title of "Observations on Forbearance in Churches." The author was an advocate for forbearance in almost an unlimited extent; for not only would he receive unbaptised persons into fellowship at the Lord's table, but he roundly affirmed, that the law of forbearance which the Apostle enjoined upon believing Jews and Gentiles in the church at Rome, (chap. xiv. and xv.,) ought to regulate the conduct of Christian churches in every age and country, amidst all the diversity of sentiment which may be found among them. But what renders this author's treatise so very singular is, that while pleading for this laxity on the one hand, he condemns every departure from the strict rule of the Word of God on the other.

A reply was written and published on these "Observations" at the time, by Samuel Jones, one of the elders of the Scotch Baptist church in London, under the title of "A Review," &c. Adverting to the apparent inconsistencies of the author of the "Observations on Forbearance," his Reviewer remarks, that it was left to Mr ——, among his other discoveries.

to teach us how that which is quite contradictory may be made to agree, and that which is altogether opposite may unite; what has always appeared a difficulty hitherto, is now become none at all. He can deliver the most solemn declarations on the necessity of the members of a Christian church being of one mind and one judgment, and their yielding obedience to all Christ's institutions, and in the next page show that believers may have fellowship together, while these things are quite disregarded; that men ought to be owned as disciples, whatever their conduct may be in reference to these matters. He can show us, that "nothing is more fallacious than the idea that we are at liberty to set aside any part of the will of Christ for the sake of union," and, at the same time, that we may have union with such as cannot conform to the will of Christ. Not only so, but he would impress us with the importance of whatever Christ hath enjoined, by putting us in mind that it is the wisdom of the world to set aside any part of Christ's laws: "It not only teaches us to neglect the traditions in which the character of Christ and the nature of his kingdom are established; thus unavoidably leading us to false views of both; but it must perpetuate division, for it sets aside that standard, by conformity to which union among the disciples can alone be produced." Yet, as if contradiction could not be made too glaring, it is the main design of his book to prove that this standard itself is not essential to Christian fellowship, and that every one ought to be acknowledged as a disciple, whatever he may think about it! But, dismissing the author of the "Review" now quoted, let us return to the subject of this Memoir.

Mr Braidwood also took up the subject of forbearance, it would seem, a year before the Review now mentioned made its appearance, and drew up "The Scriptural Rule of Forbearance in Churches, being a Reply to a Pamphlet entitled 'Observations on Forbearance in Churches.'" This, however, was never printed or published during his lifetime, and consequently it now makes its first public appearance. True, indeed, it is, that he sent the manuscript to the author of the "Observations," accompanied by a note requesting that he would peruse, examine, and consider its contents, as he had previously done, in the case of his "Letters," to Dr Chalmers. He also submitted it to the inspection of another respectable minister in Edinburgh, to whom he thought the reasonings it contained were also applicable. It is presumed that both these gentlemen, unlike Dr Chalmers, did him the honour to read it; but having done so, they returned it without note or comment. What may have been the effects produced on the mind of the author of the "Observations," can only be conjectured; but one thing is certain, that he has been less forward, since that time, to intermeddle with the affairs of the churches in connexion with Mr Braidwood, and less disposed to malign them, for what he is pleased to call "their intolerant spirit, exercising a pernicious discipline, calculated to form tyrants and slaves."

Mr Braidwood's remarks on "The Scriptural Rule of Forbearance,

like all his other writings, are solid and judicious, consequently well deserving the consideration of all the members of churches. They are the result of deep thinking, and of long and painful experience; of profound study of the Word of God, and of patient and persevering exercise in the duties of the pastoral office. He has clearly shown what are, and what are not, matters of forbearance among Christian brethren. Let us hear him in few words:—

"Is there any difference," he asks, "between saying that we *forbear* baptism, or the weekly observance of the Lord's Supper, or blood-eating, or any other positive law, and saying that we permit certain persons to disobey those laws? And who gave us authority to act thus? Did the God of heaven establish plain and simple laws for the government of his churches, and at the same time give to any individual, or to any church, a power to dispense with those laws? Is it possible that any person can allow the acknowledged laws of Christ to be avowedly disobeyed by members of his own church, without considering such laws as of very little importance, or even without doubting whether they be in reality enjoined by the authority of God?"—"It seems wonderful that any person of principle should attempt to establish the authority of Christ, by tolerating the neglect of his laws,"—"Without seeking after matters of forbearance unknown under that name to the first Christians, we shall have enough to do, if, in the true spirit of Christianity, we bear with the deficiency of our brethren as to their knowledge of the truth itself, their natural and moral infirmities, their mistaken scruples of conscience, their ignorance of many things clearly revealed in the Word of God, and the difficulty of communicating farther instruction; if upon all occasions we exercise towards them lowliness and meekness with long-suffering, non-resistance of evil, patience and forgiveness, if we mortify every hurtful passion, and if we endeavour to imitate the forbearance of God, though we should consider the laws of Christ as inviolable, and revere the greatest and the least of his commandments."

Towards the conclusion, Mr Braidwood entreats those whom he opposes, to consider that in all departures from the precepts and examples contained in the New Testament, with respect to positive institutions, there is a fatal progress. "When they began to plead for the presence of an elder not being necessary in the due administration of the Lord's Supper, was it conceived that any other persons would go so far as to maintain that *two* believers, meeting either statedly or occasionally, might lawfully partake of that ordinance, and that these two might be *females?* Was it imagined that the same arguments which led many to this conclusion, would at last embolden some of them to assert, with the utmost confidence, that *one* solitary disciple has a right to eat the Lord's Supper, not merely on the first day of the week, but at any time he pleases, provided he attend to it in a proper spirit? Was it within their contemplation that some would absolutely deny that there is now any use for elders, or any warrant for

appointing them in churches, though the same persons admit that there was such an office in the days of the Apostles? Or was it at all foreseen that they would now have so faint an impression of the obligation of all Christian duties, which depend solely on the will of the Divine lawgiver, as to make the whole of them matters of forbearance?

"It is not for me to say how much farther such loose principles may be carried. But certainly it is time for persons who in any degree are infected with them, to consider their ways, and particularly to think whether there be not some reason to suspect that, in a general point of view, the authority of God in the Scriptures weighs less with them than it formerly did; and whether, by proceeding in the same course, they will not be exposed to the danger of apostatizing from the Christian faith. They who are humble, and of a contrite spirit, and who tremble at the Word of God, will venerate all that bears the stamp of his authority, that which is morally binding in its own nature, and that which is *made such* by the revelation of his sovereign will."

I copy his conclusion, for it cannot be too often read or too much pressed upon the reader's attention. "The candid reader must have observed, that my aim throughout the discussion of this question, has been to exhibit what is really the doctrine of the Word of God respecting the duty of forbearance, and to show that there are no grounds whatever for the application of that term to the laws and ordinances of Christ; and that, as in the present case, when the Scriptures are misunderstood, and a theory endeavoured to be established upon them, it follows, as an inevitable consequence, that such a theory must be false. When it is considered, how ready our pride of understanding and self-esteem are to be enlisted in upholding principles we may have espoused and advocated, and how unwilling we are in that case to relinquish them, it ought to make us cautious in embracing sentiments which rest on any thing short of the clear and express declarations of the Word of God. And I would also guard my readers against a disputatious spirit; for there are some persons so fond of controversy, that they are never happy except when disputing on difficult subjects, or employed in making simple expressions dark and dubious. If they can strike out any thing new, they are just in their element; their favourite point is forbearance, and they will reason upon it, or at least hazard one bold assertion after another, till their opponents are completely tired; and convinced that much disputation, were it even about the Gospel itself, if it do not begin with vain jangling, is sure to end with it, and that perpetual disputes are not favourable to godliness.

"And further, let my opponents seriously ask themselves what service they can do to the cause of Christ by calumniating some of those who are endeavouring, though with much imperfection, to keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus; and how extremely inconsistent this is with the strongest expressions of forbearance, and with the heavy complaint made against all individuals and churches who oppose their favourite

scheme, as if they were totally destitute of that Christian virtue. The beam, I am afraid, must be cast out before they can see clearly to pull out the mote.

"Finally, Let every one beware of falling into the same spirit, by indulging resentment towards their accusers, treating them with asperity, or intermeddling with their affairs. 'To their own master they stand or fall.' We shall act suitably to what we profess, if we bear injuries with patience, 'not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing; but contrariwise blessing, knowing that we are thereunto called, that we should inherit a blessing.' This is a most essential part of that forbearance which God approves; and they only who exemplify it in this particular, and in others of a similar description, have a right to think that they really do espouse its neglected cause."

These are golden observations, and can never be too frequently inculcated or too strenuously enforced upon the members of Christian churches. The schisms and divisions that have for the last quarter of a century taken place among the Scotch Baptist Churches, is a serious evil, greatly to be deprecated, because it has proved a stumbling-block to multitudes that were "asking the way to Zion with their faces thitherwards," and turned them aside into by-paths. When Christians are not one in the faith, hope, and obedience of the Gospel, there must undoubtedly be something wrong, and blame must attach somewhere. This ought to be admitted as an unquestionable fact, and, therefore, the cause should be carefully sought out. The Holy Spirit does not teach contrary things. The Apostle Paul attributes the contentions and divisions which took place among the members of the Church at Corinth, to their *carnality*. It is the fleshly principle that disunites, and gives the disciples different views, and jarring inclinations, interests, and pursuits. Conceited ignorance, of which there is no lack among young men in our day, want of love to the truth, and to one another for the truth's sake—pride, envy, contempt, party attachments, worldly lusts, and a thousand similar things which might be mentioned, are the true causes of disunion in churches. Different degrees of light will never produce disunion even in sentiment, provided men are humble, teachable, and really reconciled to the saving truth, "desiring the sincere milk of the Word that they may grow thereby," and if those that are better instructed in the ways of the Lord are condescending and kind, "speaking the truth in love." Christians will never disagree about the self-denied laws of Christ's kingdom, if they have the Spirit of Christ, and love his character as the pattern for their imitation. It is their pride and worldly-mindedness that makes them wrangle and dispute when they ought to obey. When, therefore, we find any of the plain laws of Christ disputed, or any of the practices of the Apostolic Churches altered, set aside, or impugned, we may rest assured that there is something else at the foundation of all this than conscientious simple ignorance. Were a body of Christians all possessed of the Spirit of Christ, and animated by

it, as the soul pervades and animates all the members of the natural body, we should find that this common principle of intelligence and animation, would give them all, in their measure, the same views, the same hopes, the same desires, aims, and ends; it would diffuse a mutual sympathy of all with each, and of each with all, so as to suffer and rejoice together, because they have but one interest or common good; and this is the unity of the Spirit, in opposition to the divisions and contentions arising from the carnal principle. And as regards that spurious forbearance about which there is so vehement a clamour in our day—a forbearance equally courteous to truth and error, or which at least deems conscientiousness in error equivalent to soundness in the faith, when properly examined, it will be found to land in this maxim, that "there is no moral turpitude in mental error," and that men are equally acceptable to God, in their different and even discordant views and practices, as when they are standing fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the Gospel. Admit this principle, and what follows, but that we have nothing to do with one another, either as regards our religious faith or practice, provided it be no way detrimental to civil society? But if there be only one standard of faith and duty, and if there be no visible Christianity but what corresponds with that standard, then it must be our indispensable duty both to adhere to it ourselves, and also to see that our brethren, with whom we are visibly connected, adhere to it also.

What remain, of the productions of Mr Braidwood's pen, to be noticed by his biographer, need not detain us long. They consist, for the most part, of miscellaneous articles, which appeared in some religious magazines, such as the Edinburgh Quarterly Magazine, edited by Dr Charles Stuart, an eminent physician there, of which, however, only two duodecimo volumes were published, and of these there was only a very limited circulation.—In the Theological Repository, published at Liverpool, under the superintendence of the writer of this Memoir, and which extended to eleven volumes, and with a wide circulation, he wrote many articles, several of which are now reprinted in this publication, and all may be safely left to the judgment of the candid and judicious reader.

The article on the punishment of death in the case of murder, which first appeared in the New Evangelical Magazine, was a reply to a paper in the same Journal, denying the lawfulness of either individuals or governments taking away human life in any case, or for any crime, even that of murder. Since these papers appeared the discussion has undergone an extended range, both in and out of Parliament; and though the public mind has not attained to a oneness of judgment on the matter, all seem to be of opinion that the criminal code of the nation was formerly much too severe, for it has since been relaxed in a very great degree. *That*, indeed, was Mr Braidwood's judgment of the matter, while he contended that murder ought to be punished with death. His words are, "let me not be mistaken, as if I approved of our own sanguinary criminal code

in all its terrific forms. In many respects it has no affinity to the benign spirit of the Gospel, and it is offensive in a high degree to the best feelings and sympathies of our nature. To what precise extent the punishment of death ought to be carried, I pretend not to judge; but I very much doubt whether the mere loss of property by an injured individual, justly entitles the public, in any case, to demand the life of the criminal."

The pages which bear the title of "The Influence of the Doctrine of Divine Grace illustrated, and Objections answered," originally appeared as an appendix or supplement to the narrative of the case of William Mills, published by his colleague, Mr Henry David Inglis, and have been read, perhaps by thousands, without knowing that they proceeded from the pen of Mr Braidwood. This circumstance alone, added to their intrinsic excellence, seemed to suggest the propriety of including them in the present collection of his writings.

The short piece, "On the Assurance of Hope," is printed from his own manuscript, found among his papers since his decease, being the preserved copy of a letter which he wrote to a person now living, who had for a short time been connected with the Scotch Baptist church assembling in Red-Cross Street, Cripplegate, London, but who had left that body, in consequence of having embraced the theological dogmas of John Walker of Dublin. Of Mr Walker's principles and conduct, I have spoken in a former page. His creed was a species of sublimated Sandemanianism; and in his writings he very awkwardly aped Mr Sandeman's dogmatism. The men were formed with minds of a very different calibre. Sandeman was a theologian—Walker, at the best of times, was only a driveller. Sandeman would have abominated many of the sentiments of Walker, and particularly those which pertain to "the assurance of hope." But Mr Braidwood has analyzed them, in this letter to Walker's pupil, with the hand of a master in Israel, and shown their unscriptural complexion, though what he wrote failed of the desired effect on his correspondent.

Having glanced, in a cursory manner, at Mr Braidwood's writings, and entered into a detail of the circumstances and occasions which gave rise to or accompanied them, it remains that this be followed up by a short notice of his manner of life and ministry. It has been already intimated that the prominent point of view in which his character presents itself to our contemplation, is that of the elder of a Christian church; and while we examine his claims to our regard in this respect, we must keep in mind the *scriptural* standard of what pertains to such an office-bearer in the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; and it is the more necessary to do this, inasmuch as the Antichristian apostacy has egregiously perverted the views and sentiments of almost all classes of men, and to such an extent, that the wisdom of God, manifested in the delineation of the qualifications of an elder, bishop, or pastor, is now-a-days either contemned, set at nought, or despised, even by our strictest Dissenters. The reader will find these qualifications set down in 1 Tim. iii. 1—7, and also in

Titus i. 6—10, and 1 Peter v. Now, keeping these passages of Scripture before us, as the authorized standard of the *scriptural* elder, let us examine the official character of the subject of this Memoir by that rule, in a few leading particulars.

1. He must be *apt to teach*. As the kingdom of Christ was set up at the beginning by the preaching of the everlasting Gospel, so it comports with the designs of Eternal Wisdom that it should be maintained and promoted, in all ages and places of the world, by the same means—the open declaration of the Word of truth; and for this purpose, the glorified Head of the church, in whom it hath pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell, gives gifts unto men, or fits and qualifies them for the work of the ministry and the edifying of his body the church. Foremost in these qualifications must ever be ranked a scriptural acquaintance with "the truth as it is in Jesus,"—a knowledge of "the mystery of God and the Father, and of Christ, in whom are hid all the treasures of Divine wisdom;" so that he may be able to instruct the ignorant in the things which concern their eternal peace, and show unto sinners the way of salvation. The Christian elder must not only preach the Gospel, but he should have such an intimate acquaintance with it in all its bearings, as to be able, "by sound doctrine, both to exhort and reprove the gainsayers; for there have been in all ages of the church many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake." It is needless to say how little regard is paid to these things in the choice of elders, pastors, or ministers of the Word, even among our strictest Dissenters, in the age in which we live. The Scriptures might be silent respecting them for any attention that our modern doctors pay to them. In Mr Braidwood, however, we have a fair specimen of what sort of person the elder of a Christian church ought to be. No one can examine the productions of his pen, as contained in this volume, without being aware of the writer's intimate acquaintance with the Holy Scriptures. In this respect he was indeed a scribe well instructed in the things pertaining to the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus. Let any unprejudiced mind go through the volume, and mark the vast compass of doctrinal sentiment discussed in it, and he will not hesitate to admit that modern times have not furnished many persons better qualified for the elder's office.

Truth, however, compels us to admit that Mr Braidwood did not appear to the best advantage in the pulpit. He was not what is termed a graceful speaker. Though in personal stature rather above the ordinary size, and of masculine and commanding aspect, and his voice not altogether inharmonious, being strong and deep-toned; yet his whole manner was calculated to convey to a stranger the impression that he was a person of an austere disposition. Yet nothing can be imagined more incorrect or foreign to the truth of things, than such a notion. He was, both by education and temperament, and the power of the Gospel on his heart, not only

gentle, but affectionately kind; while his masculine understanding and good sense more than compensated for his deficiencies in the graces of oratory. His profound acquaintance with the Holy Scriptures, his discriminating judgment, displayed in selecting instructive subjects, and his ability in handling them, were all calculated to arrest the hearer's attention, and impress him with the conviction that this man spake the words of truth and soberness. It was no part of his business, while in the pulpit, to "amuse the fancy with facetious tales," or beguile his audience "with the enticing words of man's wisdom." He made his way to the conscience and the heart by manifestation of the truth, and dealt with his hearers as rational and accountable beings, who must shortly appear before the judgment seat of Christ. He was not what is vulgarly termed "a slap-dash off-hand preacher;" for he disdained to offer to the Lord that which cost him nothing. He brought forward no subject which he had not thoroughly studied and well-digested in his own mind, so as to be prepared to state the doctrine of the Scriptures in relation to it, "rightly dividing the Word of truth;" and his ideas were always clothed in chaste language, suited to the nature of his subject, avoiding every low and mean expression as sedulously as he rejected all pompous declamation and rhetorical flourish as unsuitable to the truth of God. There was great uniformity in his preaching: his discourses from the pulpit were never trifling or commonplace. He brought forth out of the rich treasury of Divine truth whatever was calculated to illustrate his subject, and impress it on the conscience and the heart. He preached from copious notes, but rarely wrote out the whole of his discourses, unless when he intended them for the press. His public teaching was of a different cast from that of his two excellent colleagues, M'Lean and Inglis. It was, generally speaking, more practical than that of the latter, who confined himself much to "holding forth the Word of life," making known the testimony of God concerning his Son, and calling sinners to repentance; while it was less critical than that of the former, whose logical skill, capacious mind, and general information, combined to render him a master in Israel.

2. Another important qualification for the elder's office, is that of *ability to rule* the church of God, 1 Tim. iii. 5. And this may be truly designated Mr Braidwood's great *forte*. Here his excellence invariably manifested itself, not only above his own talent in teaching, but above the ability of many or most of his contemporaries in that particular branch of the pastoral office. Firm and uncompromising in his principles, and naturally gifted with much self-possession and an extraordinary command of temper, he was eminently qualified for ruling in the church, and presiding in cases of discipline. This also may be instanced as another distinguishing feature in the character of an elder, which is very little regarded among the Dissenting churches of our day, to whom indeed the exercise of discipline is a matter of very secondary consideration. But to churches scripturally constituted, and regulated in all their social intercourse by the New

Testament, the case must be widely different. Such must know, that to conduct the affairs of Christ's house discreetly—to maintain peace, and order, and regularity, in all its proceedings—to go before the flock, to lead, and guide, and counsel them; and when a case of discipline comes before the church, requiring investigation and the decision of the whole body, to state, with clearness and candour, its nature, and the bearing which the Word of God has upon it, keeping it prominently before the brethren in its proper light, and applying to it the law of the Lord's house—must require a portion of wisdom, and experience, and ability, which does not fall to the lot of many of those who may speak fluently on the Gospel, and be adepts in the wisdom of this world. And I may take this opportunity of mentioning, that no member of the body, nor any of his own friends, more highly appreciated the value of Mr Braidwood's superior qualifications in the rule of the church, than did his venerable colleague Mr M'Lean. The writer of these lines can never forget with what emphasis he has heard the latter declare, "I have great pleasure and satisfaction in having Mr Braidwood for a colleague." And I may be pardoned for again observing how singularly blest this church was, in having three elders, each of them possessing eminent attainments in his own peculiar province, and yet all concurring in one object—the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom, and the edification of the church over which they presided, without the least jealousy of each other's talents, totally divested of the malignant principle of envy, and rejoicing in the grace bestowed on each other by their God and Saviour, whose fellow-labourers they were in the Gospel of his grace. What a contrast to the affecting scenes and unseemly proceedings which often take place in other churches!

Mr Braidwood's firmness in conducting cases of discipline in the church, combined with his love of order and regularity, has sometimes subjected him to reproachful calumnies from "unruly and vain talkers," men who would not keep their place in the body, and walk orderly, and who consequently fell under his rebuke. By persons of this stamp it was no uncommon thing to hear him represented as overbearing; their proud spirits could not brook control; but Mr Braidwood too well knew the vast importance of order, and mutual subjection and subordination, to the peace and happiness of a church, to trifle with this matter. He himself was a pattern of order and regularity in his own conduct. Never was there a person more given to punctuality, or more impressed with the importance of time, than he was; and it appeared in all his arrangements, whether private or public. So habitual was this to him, that it seemed indispensable to his comfort. With him every thing was regulated as it were by clock-work, whether in his study or arrangements in the family, yet all with the utmost composure and deliberation. There was no hurry, bustle, or confusion—sufficient time was allowed for every separate duty—nothing was neglected, nothing overdone. Order and punctuality were so enforced by him, that one might have supposed he was called to arrange the movements of the

mail-coach; and it was delightful to witness its effects in producing personal and family comfort. The same punctuality was carried out into all his deportment in church affairs. He laboured to keep every thing in its proper place, keeping steadily in his eye the apostolic admonition, "Let all things be done decently and in order."

3. *Disinterestedness* is another distinguishing feature in the character of the scriptural elder. "Feed the flock of God which is among you," says the Apostle Peter, "taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock," 1 Peter, v. And here again the conduct of Mr Braidwood exhibits a striking contrast to what is to be found generally among the present race of Dissenting ministers, educated for the pulpit in our seminaries and colleges. In fact, the practice which prevails among the Scotch Baptist churches, almost universally, regarding this matter, forms a striking contrast to what takes place among the English Baptist churches. In the latter denomination, the preachers or ministers are, with few exceptions, hired by a fixed stipend, which supports themselves and their families. Among their brethren in Scotland and the sister churches in England, it is no objection to a person's call to the pastoral office, that he prosecutes some useful trade, imitating the example of the great Apostle of the Gentiles, who could say to the Ephesian elders, "I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel; yea, ye yourselves know that these hands have ministered to my necessities, and to them that were with me: I have showed you all things, how that *so labouring* ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive," Acts, xx. 33—35. Mr Braidwood, though an indefatigable labourer in the Lord's vineyard, was engaged in mercantile business, and attended his shop and warehouse six days in the week, by which he earned a competence for the support of his family, and had wherewithal to give to him that needed. In the latter part of his life he left the counter, and retired from the business of an ironmonger, that he might superintend the concerns of the Caledonian Fire Insurance Company, then first established, and of which he was appointed Manager, a station the duties of which he discharged with characteristic prudence and exemplary diligence and zeal, enjoying the confidence of the shareholders, as well as of the public, during a period of about twenty-one years, when he retired in consequence of the infirmities of age, on a liberal allowance from the company, whose affairs he had successfully conducted for so long a time. And as a further expression of the sense in which his services were held by them, and likewise their estimation of his character, they requested that he should sit to Sir Henry Raeburn for his portrait, which was afterwards placed in the Council-Room of the Company.

Mr Braidwood never interfered with public matters so far as to take office in the municipal government of the city; but its prosperity was not

a matter of indifference to him, and he lent his aid to the support of most of the public charities: he attended many of their meetings, at which he sometimes spoke, and was always listened to with great attention. The alarming outrage, and riot, and disorder, which broke out on the 1st of January 1812, was a source of real grief to him, and deeply wounded his spirit, as indicating a great deterioration of morals among his townsmen from what he had known in early life; and in a pamphlet which he wrote and published shortly after, he suggested what he considered to be remedies for the evil, and preventives against a recurrence of it. In fine, we probably owe it to his experience in his secular employment, that Mr Braidwood was enabled to furnish his brethren with such a mass of valuable instruction on the manner of conducting business and prosecuting their lawful callings, as is to be found in his sixth letter to Dr Chalmers, Pp. 351—366 of the present volume—a letter which cannot be too often read, or too intensely studied, by all professed Christians who are engaged in trade and commerce. He himself was never rich, nor had he an overflowing capital in business; but the correct mode in which he transacted his affairs, and the regularity with which he made all his payments, established his credit with those from whom he made his purchases, and evinced that he guided his affairs with discretion. Indeed, he considered that a Christian ought to carry the fear of God into all the business of life, and be influenced therein by the high moral principles of his Word. This was frequently the subject of his public teaching; and the following anecdote may be mentioned as illustrative of his own upright conduct:—

An individual in his line of business, who had got embarrassed in his circumstances, was under the necessity of disposing of his stock in trade, in order to meet the urgent demands made upon him, and for this purpose applied to several ironmongers, to whom he offered the goods at a price below their real value, but could not procure a purchaser unless at a still further reduction. He then applied to Mr Braidwood, who, upon finding that the goods were of such a description as he could dispose of, agreed to take them, but said, as he knew they could not be manufactured for the price which was asked, that he would pay him a fair value for them. The poor man was quite overjoyed at this unexpected turn in the aspect of his affairs, by which he was enabled to overcome his difficulties, and was thus saved from what appeared to him inevitable ruin in his business. Mr Braidwood's conduct in this transaction made a deep impression on his mind, and was ever afterwards gratefully remembered by himself and family. This circumstance was lately related by the person's son to one of Mr Braidwood's friends, without being aware that the individual he was addressing had any knowledge of Mr Braidwood. In all this there was certainly nothing more than justice; but there are many (and of those too who would not choose to be ranked with the world) who would have considered this in no other light than a fair opportunity of obtaining what they might term a good bargain, whatever the other party

should suffer by the loss he sustained. The small amount of property left at his decease, sufficiently demonstrated the comparative smallness of his means; yet he was liberal in giving when called upon to supply the wants of the poor and needy, or further the interests of the Redeemer's kingdom in the world. The Lord blessed him in his basket and his store; he never wanted during his sojourn in this vale of tears; and though he made the Gospel without charge, and took nothing for his labours in the work of the ministry, he left enough to his much respected widow to support her in comfort for the remainder of her days in this world.

Another feature in the character of a Christian elder mentioned by the Apostle, is *hospitality*, 1 Tim. iii. 2. In this also the subject of this Memoir was highly exemplary, being always happy in having his brethren around him on every convenient opportunity. Nor was it to one or two that his hospitality was displayed, it was general in its character; and particularly attentive was he to the strangers that visited Edinburgh from all the other churches; for such his door was ever open, and his table provided. And this kindness (in which Mrs Braidwood most heartily and warmly co-operated with him, in administering to the comfort of their Christian friends) was but subordinate to the advantages which were derived from the example which was set by him in his own family, and his edifying conversation, which served to render his house not only a pleasant home for his guests, but also a place of instruction.

There are a few traits in the character of Mr Braidwood, of perhaps minor interest, which must not be wholly overlooked in this outline of his biography. Though his first appearance to a stranger, as has been already intimated, was by no means prepossessing, or calculated to ingratiate esteem and affection, yet what appeared at first sight forbidding, almost instantly vanished when you began to converse with him. There was a natural cheerfulness of temper in him, probably improved and heightened by his clear views of the Gospel, and this diffused a sweet serenity over his mind. The Gospel had imparted to him a portion independent of all sublunary things; and it was a soul-satisfying one. He appeared incapable of envying another, either of the enjoyments of this world's good, or of those gifts which are most highly esteemed among men. No man could be more candid in his judgment of men and things. He was ever ready to award to others the measure of praise to which they were fairly entitled; and he was conscientiously careful to speak evil of no man. This cheerfulness of mind rendered his company desirable even to those who were more disposed to levity, and who formed their judgment of men and things from a somewhat different standard. The sound good sense by which his conversation was invariably characterised, his discriminating judgment, which manifested itself on whatever subject became the topic of discourse, and the pertinency and solidity of his remarks, all conspired to render him an interesting and instructive companion even to those whom nature had formed less constitutionally grave. As there was no effort to shine in conversation, so his

superior judgment provoked no desire for wrangling or contradiction in others: it diffused an agreeable variety, and led to a thorough conviction that he was a good man, and of quick discernment.

His love of truth, and profound reverence for the Sacred Oracles, were ever conspicuous in all he did and said. Whatever had the appearance of duplicity, deceit, and falsehood, was an abomination to him, and excited his perfect disgust. But especially was this the case when he saw, or thought he saw, any trifling with Divine revelation. He could not endure to hear the Word of God lightly spoken of, or treated irreverently, so as to promote the laughter of fools. When any thing of this kind came before him, he became sensitive in the highest degree. His indignation flashed like fire, and he would become so agitated as to require retirement before he could resume his usual serenity and composure of mind. Regarding the Holy Scriptures as the oracles of the living God, by means of which the foolish were to be made wise unto salvation, and the hearts of sinful mortals purified, Mr Braidwood regarded them as most sacred, and ever cherished for them the profoundest reverence; so that one might as soon expect to hear him profanely use the name of the adorable Creator, as pass without rebuke any attempt to deteriorate the Word of God, either by misapplying it, or mystifying its meaning.

This leads me to advert to another striking feature in his character as an elder, namely, his solemn, fervent, and energetic manner in prayer. In his style of preaching he was earnest, solemn, and impressive, ever attentive to improve the passing events of Divine Providence, especially those of an afflictive kind, in which any of the members of the church were concerned. On such occasions he would pour forth from the fulness of his heart the richest consolations, in the most touching and pathetic manner, speaking on such subjects from experience of the Lord's dealings with himself, by which he was qualified to comfort others with the consolations wherewith he himself was comforted of God. But his prayers on all occasions were remarkable. His expressions were rich, varied, and comprehensive, calculated to bring others, where he himself evidently stood, to the footstool of Divine mercy, the throne of grace; and there would he plead, in the fervour and affection of his heart, with Him who is emphatically the hearer of prayer. In his ministrations he made no distinction between the rich and the poor; he was of a sympathizing and compassionate disposition, and was much esteemed and valued by the afflicted, to whom his visits were peculiarly acceptable. On these occasions, his prayers with and for them, as well as the suitableness of his addresses to the God of all patience and consolation, were highly calculated to lift up the hands that hang down, and confirm the feeble knees, by pouring the balm of consolation into their troubled spirits.

Mr Braidwood was twice married. His first wife was a Miss Brown, daughter of the Rev. Mr Brown, near Pennycuick, by whom he had several children, in the education and training up of whom he took a pecu-

liar interest and derived from it great pleasure, instilling into their minds the principles of Christianity and lessons of wisdom and prudence, such as he well inculcates in his discourses on "Parental Duties." And here it cannot be out of place to remark, that though constitutionally strong and robust, and possessing a masculine understanding, he was a man of fine feelings and of acute sensibilities, which he manifested in a high degree, more especially when visited with bereaving dispensations of Providence in his own family. On those occasions he has been known to be "incapable of refraining himself before them that were with him." Such was the case when it pleased God to visit him with the loss of the mother of his children, and such also when many of the latter were removed by death. I have formerly mentioned the death of his son Ebenezer, who died of a consumptive complaint on the 25th January 1803, at the age of seventeen. This event affected him in an uncommon degree, and induced him to compile a narrative of the principal occurrences of the youth's life, not with the remotest view to publication, it is true, but to be handed about for perusal in the circle of his own family and friends. One cannot read this manuscript, which is now before me, without perceiving how common occurrences and incidents are detailed and dwelt upon, which, no doubt, to him possessed peculiar interest from their connexion with the deceased, but which, at the same time, show the strength of his affection and the tender sensibilities of his mind. But the "Practical Observations" with which he has followed up that memoir of his son, are so truly excellent, that, as they form no part of the narrative, and are of universal interest and application, I think it would be wrong to withhold them from the reader, and I therefore give them in this place.

"There is matter enough in the preceding narrative to justify many and long remarks, were I disposed to write but a very small part of what has occurred to my own mind. But I wish rather to say little and to think much. In those afflicting dispensations with which I have been visited, I have chiefly to do with God, who has thus been pleased to try my faith, and to call me to repentance for every immoderate attachment even to the lawful enjoyments of this mortal life.

"Were I so inclined, it would scarcely be possible for me to describe the state of affliction in which, for the last twelve months, I have been involved, from various causes, some of which only are explained in the narrative. When matters, in some respects, were coming to a crisis, my situation reminded me of what I had long ago heard from my much respected father, concerning a woman who trusted in God, and who used to say, when any of her friends or relatives died—'The Lord liveth.' A sublime truth, eminently suited upon such occasions to calm and to solace the soul. 'My earthly friend is dead, but Jehovah liveth. My rock, my refuge, the God of my salvation, my best and greatest friend, shall live for ever.' But alas, how feeble and inconstant are the best of human

beings! The same woman, who on many occasions was strong in faith, giving glory to God, met with a peculiarly heavy trial, I think it was the death of her husband, which completely overcame her, and prevented her from speaking of her former ground of comfort. This occasioned a most severe reproof from one of her young children, who unwittingly said to her, 'Mother, what is the matter with you? Is God dead?' The poor afflicted woman was struck with remorse. After some consideration, she moderated her excessive sorrow, and resumed her former ground of joy in affliction—'The Lord liveth.'

"Like this woman, I have often been sorrowful and dumb. My distresses appeared to me too great to be the subject of conversation with fellow-creatures; and even the sympathy of my Christian friends, for which I ought to have been grateful to them, rather tended to increase than to alleviate my sorrow. But I never forgot that the Lord liveth. Nor do I mean to say that this truth was ever called in question by the person whose experience has just been described; though there was a temporary, and perhaps only a partial, suspension of the comfort which she derived from it. To God only it was possible for me to pour out my heart, and I found him a refuge in the time of trouble. On such occasions, prayer is a different thing altogether from what it is when we are living at our ease, as my son remarked some time before his death. 'O father,' said he, 'what is prayer in a time of ease and prosperity? It is nothing but a mere form in comparison of what it is when we are in great affliction.'

"All who have any serious profession of Christianity, must know something of the improvement which we ought to make of the awful and alarming dispensations of Divine Providence. Yet, alas! how often are such persons, like other men, too little occupied in considering the vanity of this world, and the infinite importance of eternal life? They can perhaps moralize upon affliction with cool indifference, not duly recollecting that they themselves also are in the body, and subject to the miseries which they see around them. They can show how Christians ought to overcome the world, while they themselves are sinking under its cares, immersed in its pleasures, or carried away with its business, or with its vanities and its delusive hopes. And some of them can state, accurately enough, the foundation of a sinner's hope in the sight of God, while they do not sufficiently consider that they themselves are sinners, or how their creed would support them in the immediate prospect of death and judgment.

"What then is the practical use that we ought to make of such dispensations? One principal design of them undoubtedly is, to give us deeper impressions of the uncertainty of all human enjoyments, and of life itself, such as may have an abiding tendency to regulate our whole temper and conduct, to make us occupy our talents with diligence, and to endear to us the Christian hope.

"We all know perfectly that we shall die, and that, with regard to the

remainder of our time here, we cannot promise upon a single day. But which of us lives uniformly under those impressions which a firm belief of such solemn things ought to produce? We hear of death devouring multitudes every day, without being in general more affected by it, than we are by the common occurrences of life in which we have no personal concern. When the king of terrors makes a nearer approach to us, by snatching away persons with whom we have been well acquainted, we think more seriously. For some of *them* perhaps we shed a tear. But when death, as it were, attacks ourselves, by making inroads upon our families and our dearest friends, we are agitated and alarmed in the highest possible degree. Every thing changes its aspect; this world disappears, and sinks into nothing; eternity seems just at hand, and our distracted souls can only be set at rest by the enjoyment of good hope towards God with regard to ourselves, as well as with regard to our departed friends.

"It is right surely that, on such occasions, we should be peculiarly awake to the importance of eternal things, and seek all our consolation in the Gospel of Christ, and its blessed hope. It is well when we can find no other refuge in times of deep affliction. But is it not equally true, *at all times*, that our nearest relatives shall die, and consequently that they and we must part, how soon we know not? Ought we not then to live *always* with them on these terms, acquiescing in the will of God, so palpably known to us; habitually concerned about the eternal salvation of those whom we dearly love; and careful that we ourselves continue in the faith, and in the spirit and temper of the disciples of Jesus, that we may be ready at his call?

"It is thus only that we shall be able to endure such mournful scenes. Every argument that can be successfully used to support us under affliction, has, less or more, a relation to that which, in life and death, is the chief consolation of Christians—the hope of being ever with the Lord. Their patience is 'the patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.' And they who are 'begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, rejoice greatly in that hope, though now for a season, if need be, they are in heaviness through manifold temptations.' This is likewise the only satisfactory ground of comfort with respect to our dear friends, when they are removed from us by death, though in every case it becomes us to say, 'It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good.' If they sleep in Jesus, we have no cause to sorrow even as others who have no hope. If on such occasions our grief be excessive, it is ungenerous and selfish in a high degree, and gives our adversaries an opportunity to say concerning us, 'Where is their God?'

"It must be owned indeed, that severe trials are intended to produce 'heaviness,' or a proper feeling of the Lord's rod, without which it could have no effect; and in some cases very deep exercises of soul, which, were they to continue in the same degree, would unfit us for the business of life. Those violent emotions must and will subside. But with them we are too

ready to lose the deep and solid conviction which we had obtained of the reality and importance of life eternal in the world to come, the absolute vanity of this life, and all that pertains to it, the preciousness of the Gospel to dying sinners, and the necessity of making our calling and election sure.

"If such solemn warnings do not effectually call us to repentance, or do not prevent us from returning, with the spirit of worldly men, to the business, or to the follies and crimes of this mortal life, they will only tend to aggravate our condemnation. At least we shall, by so doing, render it necessary that we should be again roused from our vain dreams of worldly happiness, and mercifully called to deep repentance, whatever pain and anguish it may cost us. Remember *who* hath said, 'Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.'"

After remaining a widower some years, Mr Braidwood, in 1793, united himself to Miss Margaret Mercer, the daughter of R. Mercer, M.D., Selkirk, who still survives him, and who, by her kind attention and assiduous care, greatly assisted in rearing up his children, who had been deprived of their mother at a tender age; and proved eminently serviceable to him in the subsequent years of his life, particularly when the decay of his faculties rendered the attentions of such a kind and affectionate helpmate invaluable.

In the end of December 1826, Mr Braidwood felt rather indisposed, although there was nothing at that time to excite alarm, yet the nature of the malady soon manifested itself, when he ceased to attend to his official duties as an elder of the church; but his memory was not wholly impaired till a year or two after. His delight, however, seemed to have been in the house of God; for he continued for a long time to visit almost daily the place in which he had so long been accustomed to worship, and in which it was still his desire to be engaged; and though incapacitated for filling up his place in the public services of the church, he conducted the worship of the family until a very short time before his decease.

His death took place on the 13th of October 1830, and his remains were interred in the Greyfriars' churchyard. As his life had been eminently useful in his Lord's kingdom, so his end was peaceful. I shall only farther add, that the length to which this Memoir has extended prevents me from laying before the reader even extracts of the numerous letters of condolence received by the church and Mrs Braidwood, upon the event of his death from all the churches in the connection, showing the estimation in which he was held, and the loss sustained by the removal of such a valuable Christian teacher.

Now, to conclude these biographical sketches and observations, I am perfectly aware that it is only by such persons as have a taste for the good Word of God, and who are competent to distinguish between the

things that differ, to prefer the wisdom of God to that of the scribes and doctors of ecclesiastical law; in a word, who can discriminate between the scriptural elder and the modern *clergyman*, whether conformed or nonconformist, and whose judgment is so regulated by an unction from the Holy One, as to give a decided preference to the former, though less gaudy and sparkling in the eyes of men, that a proper estimate can be formed of the character of the subject of this Memoir. Bring it to the test of the depraved inclination and vitiated judgment of the sons of science, the wise men of this world, who rule the fashion in religion as well as other things, and it will be lightly esteemed; but try it by the standard of Divine revelation, "the law and the testimony," and it will stand forth as exhibiting the man of God, a scribe well-instructed in the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, and rightly dividing the word of truth—a servant of the Lord, caring for his Master's flock—one of the watchmen of Zion, always upon his watch-tower, guarding against the incursions of the devouring wolf—a good and faithful servant, who, we have no doubt, has now entered into the joy of his Lord. It is an undoubted fact, that most human characters look best at a distance; and that, on a nearer inspection and more exact scrutiny, they lose much of the glory with which they strike the beholder's eye. The case was not so with the character of Mr Braidwood; for though none of his friends would ever think of claiming for him an exemption from the frailties incident to humanity, (for he was a man of like passions with ourselves,) yet his moral worth and most valuable qualities were best known to those who had an opportunity of looking closely into his character, and of comparing it with the pattern of the scriptural elder as drawn by the pen of inspiration. Let the church, whom he so long served in the Gospel of God, be thankful to the King of Zion for bestowing upon them so faithful, laborious, and disinterested a servant; and let all the churches in the denomination be instant in prayer to Him with whom is the residue of the Spirit, that he would raise up, and qualify, and send forth into his vineyard, many such labourers as William Braidwood—men fearing God and hating covetousness, lovers of the souls of men, and who are willing to spend and be spent in their Divine Master's service!

A

DISCOURSE

ON THE DUTY OF

MUTUAL EXHORTATION

IN THE

CHURCHES OF CHRIST.

"And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another."—Rom. xv. 14.

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ADDRESS

TO ALL WHO BELIEVE THE GLORIOUS GOSPEL OF CHRIST, AND ESTEEM IT THEIR PRIVILEGE, AND INDISPENSABLE DUTY, TO OBSERVE HIS ORDINANCES, IN A STATE OF SEPARATION FROM THE WORLD.

My Brethren,

I am sensible that it would be improper to address the world in general on the subject of the following pages. Unbelievers, and even strict professors in the national systems of religion, will not find themselves interested in it; there being no such custom as is here recommended, except in churches formed on the plan of those which were planted by the Apostles.* But I hope that you, who, in consequence of believing the gospel, have been baptised, and taught to observe all things whatsoever Jesus Christ hath commanded,† will see the importance of brethren in churches speaking the truth in love, that they may grow up into him in all things, who is the head, even Christ;‡ and of exhorting one another daily, while it is called to-day, lest any be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.‖ I doubt not you will also readily admit, that brethren on whom the Lord hath conferred gifts for speaking to the edification of others, do not perform this duty, merely by filling up a certain portion of time allotted for the purpose, unless they are animated by the motives of the gospel, and speak the truth in a humble, zealous, and affectionate manner. On these accounts I

* There is an obvious reason for not confining the Address to persons qualified for speaking in public. Those who hear are no less interested in this subject than those who speak, for the thing intended is the edification of all. And the same authority which binds the one to speak as the oracles of God, binds also the other to be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; to receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save their souls; and to be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving their ownselves. James i. 19, 21, 22.

† Matt. xxviii. 19, 20. ‡ Ephes. iv. 15. ‖ Heb. iii. 13.

hope to be forgiven for thus attempting, in a very familiar way, to show you what is implied in speaking as the oracles of God.

The substance of the following discourse was delivered some time ago to the Baptist Church at Edinburgh, who are all persuaded that it is the duty and privilege of brethren in Christian Churches to exhort one another, not only in private, but also when publicly assembled together.* It was therefore unnecessary to establish this point, by the various arguments and Scripture proofs that might have been adduced, to corroborate what is only hinted at in the introduction. Indeed, those who will not be satisfied with a plain injunction, such as that contained in Heb. x. 25, "Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together, but exhort one another," (where the brethren in general are evidently commanded to exhort one another, when assembled for the purpose of divine worship,) will hardly be convinced by any argument, however plain, forcible, and conclusive.

I have touched both at the matter and manner of exhortation, but have dwelt chiefly on the last of these; not from any idea that our manner of speech is of greater importance than the truths we declare, or the duties we enjoin; but merely because it appears to me that a great deal more depends on our manner of addressing one another in relation to the things of God, than is generally imagined; and because this has been almost totally overlooked by many Congregational Churches, not a few of whom entertain a principle directly opposite to what is here maintained.

Though you are earnestly entreated, in the following pages, to exercise any gifts which the Lord hath conferred upon you, for the edification of your brethren, it is far from my intention to make you consider yourselves as teachers. This would be to affirm that *all are teachers*, which is peremptorily denied by the Apostle Paul;† and that a society of Christians may law-

* It is perhaps scarcely needful to observe that, on the contrary, we are as fully persuaded that women are entirely prohibited from public teaching or exhorting, as being inconsistent with that modesty and subjection which becomes the sex. 1 Cor. xiv. 34, 35. 1 Tim. ii. 11, to the end.

† 1 Cor. xii. 29.

fully *be many masters*, or teachers, opposite to an express injunction of the Apostle James.* It would confound the distinction between teachers and taught, which is every where preserved in the Word of God, and must in the nature of the thing exist. It would confer upon all who have any gifts for speaking, that authority, rule, and presidency, which is always connected with teaching, and belongs only to those who are appointed by the Churches of Christ to the *office* of Teachers.† While therefore we give full scope to the modest, humble, and zealous exercise of every gift in its proper place, agreeably to that beautiful representation of the body of Christ, 1 Cor. xii., we maintain as firmly the Lord's appointment of pastors and teachers, who have the oversight of the flock; and think it highly necessary to check the pride of those who would take this office at their own hand, without the suffrage of their brethren,‡ or even aspire at the exercise of gifts which they do not really possess. ‖

Neither is it our opinion, that all are qualified for exhorting one another, as private brethren in the Church. We are persuaded that the Lord hath bestowed talents of this kind upon some, and withheld them from others. But it has seldom been necessary to prohibit any of this last description from coming forward in a public manner, and thus to step out of the place assigned them in the body; we need rather to encourage than to restrict.

It is true I have set before you the example of Christ and his Apostles; but what higher example can be proposed? And, if the duty is enjoined, it can only be performed, like all other duties, by imitating such examples. Even the elders of the churches have no pretensions to an immediate commission from the Lord, or to any of those extraordinary qualifications with which the Apostles were endowed. Yet, as overseers of the flock of God, they are surely to imitate the humility, faithfulness, and zeal of the Apostles, and of the Lord himself.§ In

* James iii. 1. † 1 Thess. v. 12. 1 Tim. iii. 2, 4, 5. Chap. iv. 11, 12. 2 Tim. iv. 2. Tit. ii. 15. Heb. xiii. 17.
‡ Acts xiv. 23. Rom. x. 15. Tit. i. 5. ‖ Rom. xii. 3.
§ Acts xx. 17 to 36, particularly ver. 28, 31, 35. 1 Pet. v. 1—4.

like manner, you are not called to imitate the Apostles as public teachers, if this office has not been conferred upon you by a Church of Christ. But, though you are so far from arrogating to yourselves the character of Apostles, as not even to assume the authority, or usurp the place of ordinary teachers, you may safely imitate these high examples, in every duty you have to perform as members of the body of Christ.* And there can be no harm in copying to the utmost of your power, that humility, self-denial, fervency, and affection, with which they spoke the Word of God. Nay, it is only by doing so that you can expect to profit the souls of your brethren.

Remember also, my beloved brethren, that it is not enough merely to be convinced in your judgments, that you are bound by the law of Christ to exhort and edify one another; though you may have such a view of the order of the Churches of Christ, as will lead you to do this with outward decency. If you would assist in building up the Churches of the Saints, which is the best work you can be engaged in, and the highest honour you are capable of receiving in this world; you must live by the faith of the Son of God, enjoying a sense of his love, maintaining intercourse with God by fervent prayer in secret, as well as by attending on public ordinances, and counting all things loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus your Lord. It is only when we speak from experience, that it can be profitable either to ourselves or others. Mere knowledge may inform the judgment, but it cannot warm the heart. This last is the province of charity or love, concerning which, the Apostle says, "charity edifieth."† And when our hearts are filled with love, it will appear, not only in our way of speaking about the gospel, and the commandments of Christ, but in the whole of our conduct and deportment. The most effectual way to edify the souls of our brethren, is to show in ourselves an example of the practical influence of the Word of God; and to walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and given himself for us.‡ To this I apprehend the Apostle chiefly refers, when he exhorts to provoke one another to love and to good works.‖

* 1 Cor. x. 33, and xi. 1. Ephes. v. 1, 2.
† 1 Cor. viii. 1.
‡ Eph. v. 1, 2.
‖ Heb. x. 24.

When we thus enjoy the comforts of the gospel, and live unto Him who died for us, it will be an easy and natural thing to speak the truth in love, to occupy our talents in the place that God hath assigned us, and in so doing, to seek not our own honour, but the glory of God and the good of his people.

But when we fall into a state of lukewarmness and indifference, not fully awake to the importance of Divine things, having but faint impressions of our own guilt and wretchedness, and of the greatness of the love of God, who gave his beloved Son to the death for us, and quickened us when we were dead in sins, how can we expect to edify one another? If we do not speak out of the abundance of our hearts, it will be a burdensome service to speak at all. When this is our situation, we become negligent in the performance of this duty; some who might be employed in it, avoid it altogether, and others keep up the mere outward form, speaking of the things which concern our everlasting welfare, in a lifeless, formal, and insipid manner.

I would exhort you, my brethren, against making such a dull unanimated appearance in the profession of the name of Christ. A spirit of this kind is apt to steal in upon us by degrees, and I am persuaded that there is no evil at this time more universally prevalent among the followers of Christ. Yet His coming draweth nigh; the Judge standeth before the door; and the cry will soon be heard, Behold the bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him. While he tarrieth, not only the foolish, but even the wise virgins are asleep.* Dream not, however, of peace and safety in this unwarrantable posture. You will at any rate be afraid and ashamed, if you thus meet the Lord at his coming. And though all his people will be safe in that tremendous day, you have no reason to think that you are his people, if you sleep like those who are of the night and of darkness, and who say peace and safety, when sudden destruction is coming upon them. The Apostle shows the very opposite of this to be the character of the true followers of Christ, while he thus addresses them, "But ye, brethren, are not in darkness,

* Mat. xxv. 5.

that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day; we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep as do others; but let us watch and be sober." *

I have only further to request, that you would attentively consider the Word of God in relation to this important subject; and that such of you as are possessed of gifts, would endeavour to regulate the exercise of them by that unerring standard. To assist you in this, especially those of you who labour under many disadvantages by residing at a distance from churches, is the intention of publishing the following discourse. Praying that the Lord may accompany it with his effectual blessing, I am affectionately yours, in the bonds of the gospel,

THE AUTHOR.

EDINBURGH, 30th JULY 1787.

* 1 Thess. v. 4, 5, 6.

DISCOURSE, &c.

"If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God."—1 Pet. iv. 11.

The brethren in general are here addressed. The Apostle does not say, if any elder or teacher speak—but any man, that is, any brother. This should be understood in the same way as the words that follow:—"If any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth." All who have this world's goods are called to minister to the saints, and they are to do it according to the ability which God giveth. In like manner, all who are possessed of any gift for public usefulness in the Church of Christ, are commanded to use it according to their ability. There may be some who have no gifts of this description, and there are also some who have nothing wherewith to minister; but, while it is the duty of the rest of the brethren to teach the one, and minister to the wants of the other, I beseech you all to consider, that the smallest mite is accepted in ministering, and it would be a crime even to withhold a mite, when it is in our power to give it. Apply this to the other duty of speaking or exhorting. If nothing has been conferred upon you, nothing will be required; but if the Lord hath given you ability thus to contribute, though in a small degree, to the edification and comfort of the Church, and you neglect to do so, remember you will be called to an account for hiding your talent.

The great end here proposed by speaking as the oracles of God, as well as by ministering to the saints, is, that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ. Is it possible to urge upon your minds a more powerful motive to enforce this duty? If you have tasted that the Lord is gracious, you must surely be desirous that his name may be glorified; yet none are truly desirous of this, who do not bear their part in the duties enjoined upon Christians, and are remiss in occupying those talents which the Lord hath conferred upon them.

Another motive which will readily occur to you, is the edification of the brethren. How much ought this to be at heart with us? and should we not be fully persuaded that this, and every other appointment in the kingdom of Christ, will answer the gracious purposes for which they were intended, when we act agreeably to his will, and have all our dependence on him? But if such great ends are to be accomplished by the brethren speaking as the oracles of God, it may well be expected that they will be anxious to know the meaning of this exhortation, and how they ought to speak, so as God in all things may be glorified, and the Church comforted, and built up in their most holy faith. Allow me, therefore, to say a few things on this subject. By the oracles of God is meant his Word, by which he speaks and reveals his will to men.* When you are commanded to speak as the oracles of God, the meaning is, that the matter of what you say should be exactly conformable to his Word, and the manner of it agreeable to what is enjoined and exemplified in the Scripture, as well as suitable to the nature of the truth which you declare. Let us make a few remarks on each of these.

I. As to the *matter* of exhortation. Notice, in the first place, that the grand leading subject must be the truth concerning Christ. Speak of the dignity of his person as the great God and our Saviour, the perfection of his atonement, the assurance given of salvation to those who believe on his name, the suitableness of that salvation to our circumstances, who are poor, wretched, miserable sinners. It is thus we are exhorted to speak *the truth* in love, that we may grow up into him in all things who is the head, even Christ.† And exhorting one another daily, is represented as a means of saving us from an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God; as well as preventing us from being hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.‡ Present to our view the glorious object of hope which is held forth in the gospel, that we may be encouraged to keep the faith‖—press it upon our minds from the consideration of the faithfulness, power, and mercy of God, who hath called us to his eternal glory by Jesus Christ§—show us how this hope is warranted by the death and resurrection of Jesus, who rose as the first fruits of them that sleep,¶ and now says, Surely I come quickly, amen.** This truth, or salvation through Christ, is that which we see is chiefly dwelt on in the Word of God. It

* Acts vii. 38. Rom. iii. 2. Heb. v. 12. † Eph. iv. 15.
‡ Heb. iii. 12, 13. ‖ 1 Thess. iv. 18. Chap. v. 11. § 1 Thess. v. 23, 24. 2 Thess. iii. 3. Heb. x. 23. Jude, ver. 24. Rom. viii. 31, 32.
¶ 1 Cor xv. 12—29. ** Rev. xxii. 20.

may be termed the sum and substance of Divine revelation. Moses and all the prophets wrote of Christ.* They testified beforehand, the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.† Christ crucified was the whole amount of the Apostles' preaching.‡ In this they gloried as a foundation of hope to themselves; and all their labours were directed to show to the world the evidence of this truth, and to establish the churches in the faith of it. Every thing else in Christianity is connected with this, and is important and valuable, just in proportion as it stands nearly related to the truth. Therefore, if you would speak as the oracles of God, let the cross of Christ be the main subject of your exhortations, and let every thing you say, be accompanied with the savour of his blessed name.

Second, The commandments of our Lord and Saviour, likewise furnish ample matter for exhortation. Put the brethren in remembrance of these. Count none of his commandments trifling or unimportant, while you remember that they are all enforced by the authority of Him who died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living. Keep always in your view the inseparable connexion between the faith and hope of the gospel, and subjection to the laws of Christ. Warn us of the danger of making an empty profession of the name of Christ, or saying unto him Lord, Lord, while we do not the will of his Father who is in heaven.‖ Enforce upon our consciences every commandment of the Lord, by the motives of the gospel, the love of God,§ the hope of eternal life,¶ the fear of being disapproved of at that day, when Christ shall reward his faithful followers.** Insist chiefly on those commandments which are most contrary to our natural inclinations, which we have the strongest temptations to oppose, or to which, from whatever cause, you may see us least attentive.

Third, Urge upon us most frequently the things of greatest importance. Christ speaks of the great and weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith.†† There are a great variety of subjects in the Word of God, and they are not all of equal importance in themselves, though it is of the greatest consequence to us, to regard every thing in its proper place. Notice what is most insisted on in the Word of God, and let your exhortations bear some proportion to this. We do not speak as the oracles of God, if we often dwell on those things

* Luke xxiv. 26, 27, 46. Acts x. 43. † 1 Pet. i. 11.
‡ 1 Cor. i. 23. 2 Cor. iv. 2, 5, 6, 7. ‖ Matt. vii. 21, 22, 23.
§ Rom. xii. 1. 2 Cor. v. 14, 15. 1 John iii. 16. Chap. iv. 7—11.
¶ Tit. ii. 11—15. 1 John iii. 2, 3.
** 1 Cor. ix. 27. Chap. vi. 9, 10. Gal. vi. 3, 4, 5, 7, 8. Matt. xxv. 26, to the end.
†† Matt. xxiii. 23.

which are but seldom mentioned in the Scriptures, and sparingly touch at other things, which are to be met with almost in every page. Beware also of too great a fondness for any particular point, as this might endanger your neglect of something else, equally important, or perhaps more so. Observe the connexion and harmony of the truths of God, and see that you make every thing to correspond according to that beautiful order which is established in his Word.

Fourth, Exhort chiefly on practical subjects: the experience of a Christian, the comfort and joy of the truth, a conversation becoming the gospel, with the motives which powerfully constrain the followers of Christ to be subject to his laws. Let it be something that has a tendency to warm the heart, to raise our affections above this present world, to comfort us under affliction, to enliven our souls, and make us more zealous and active in the service of God. To do this, is to speak as the oracles of God; for every doctrine revealed in the Scripture is meant to affect the heart, and regulate the practice. Much is there said about the unprofitableness of mere knowledge, or vain speculation.* I do not pretend to say that the brethren are absolutely prohibited from instructing one another, or opening up the meaning of a Scripture text, if they do it properly, and make a suitable improvement. The brethren in general are exhorted to teach and admonish one another; but in order to this, it is necessary that they should be full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, and that the word of Christ should dwell in them richly in all wisdom.† When this is the case, they will not be much taken up with mere speculation. Let what you say in general, therefore, be exhortation properly so called. This will do us more good than teaching, for most of us are not so deficient in point of knowledge, as we are in the experience and practice of Christians.

To enforce this still farther, let it be observed, that many of the brethren who are incapable to teach, may be very useful in the way of exhorting the Church, and if they step out of their proper place, they cannot expect to edify their brethren. A caution is given against this, Rom. xii. 3, "For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith." A beautiful description is likewise given of the body of Christ, 1 Cor. chap. xii., from which

* Mat. vii. 21, to the end. 1 Cor. xiii. 1, 2. Chap viii. 1, 2 3. James ii. 14, to the end. 1 John ii. 4. Chap. iii. 17.

† Rom. xv. 14. Col. iii. 16.

we see that it consists of a variety of members occupying different stations for the good of the whole. It is therefore necessary that every one should know the place assigned him in the body, that he may minister therein with profit to his brethren.*

II. Let us now proceed to give a few hints as to *the manner* of exhortation.

First, Let all that you say be directed to some end. Never speak in a vague, loose, and unmeaning way; the intention of your doing so, is not merely to fill up the time—you ought always to have the Church's edification in view; and in order to this, it is necessary that you be pointed and express as to some

* It is manifest, from the description here referred to, that some are teachers in distinction from the brethren in general, who are to be taught and instructed by them. There must therefore be an essential difference between that teaching which is allowed to the brethren, and that which is the peculiar province of those who are teachers by office; which seems to consist in the following particulars:—First, It would appear that expounding the Scriptures, and illustrating subjects in a doctrinal way, belongs to the pastors of a church in distinction from the brethren. It does not seem to be the province of the latter, to speak on any occasion solely with a view to establish doctrinal points, or to open up the meaning of the Word of God. The teaching that is enjoined on the brethren in general, seems only to be what is necessary to lay a foundation for practical exhortations, in which they should chiefly be employed. This appears from their being frequently called to exhort, admonish, comfort, edify, &c., and only once in the New Testament commanded to teach, where also it is connected with admonishing one another,* and cannot be supposed to confer upon them the office of teaching. Second, To exhort and convince gainsayers is also the peculiar province of teachers. This is expressly mentioned as a part of the elder's character and office, that he should "hold fast the faithful word, as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine, both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers."† And this is nowhere said to be the duty of the brethren in a public way, though some may be able to do it in private, and all are supposed capable to give an answer to every man that asketh them a reason of the hope that is in them.‡ Third, The authority and presidency that is connected with teaching, belongs only to those who have the oversight of the flock of God.‖ See the Address, p. 4, and 5. And the distinction of which we now treat, is visible, and ought to be so in every well regulated assembly of Christians.

Two cases only occur to me wherein it may be necessary for brethren to go beyond the bounds that are here prescribed. In places where there are no elders, the nature of the thing requires that one of the brethren should preside, but this may be done without setting himself up as a teacher. And when a church has a particular person in view, as being fit for the elder's office, or for preaching the gospel to the world, it is very proper that trial should be made of his gifts in the most public way: but in this case he proceeds with the suffrage of his brethren, who have certainly as good a right to try the gifts of those who are to bear office among them, as they have to confer any office, when fully satisfied with the person's qualifications.§

* Col. iii. 16. † Tit. i. 9, See also, 2 Tim. ii. 24, 25. ‡ 1 Pet. iii. 15.
‖ 1 Pet. v. 2, 5. § 1 Tim v. 22. Chap. iii. 1—14, particularly ver. 6, 10. Tit. i. 5—11,

particular thing, in which you would have us corrected or established. It is not enough that good things are said: we will not be much edified, unless we discern the purpose you have in view, and have our minds drawn to the consideration of some particular subject—mention what it is, and keep to the point, for thus only we can give that degree of attention which is necessary, in order to our profiting by what you say.

This is included in speaking as the oracles of God; for though the Scriptures are not written in the form of a system, yet we meet with no confusion there:—a subject is often dwelt upon and pursued in the closest manner. In reading the Word of God, our minds are not distracted with a variety of things confusedly blended together. How closely do the Apostles keep to the point in preaching the Gospel, declaring uniformly the death and resurrection of Christ as the foundation of hope to guilty men, and assuring all that believe, of salvation through his name? Is there not also a beautiful order to be observed in the Epistle to the Romans, where the Apostle first treats of the corruption of human nature, then of justification through Christ, and next of the blessed effects produced by that justification, keeping always to the subject in hand? See too how closely he keeps to his text, when he illustrates and improves the Old Testament Scriptures, particularly in the Epistle to the Hebrews, Chapters 3, 4, 8, 9, and 10. The same order is not indeed to be seen in every other part of the Scripture; but the language is always expressive, and suited to call our attention to the great things therein revealed.

Perhaps, if what has just been said were duly attended to, it might greatly shorten some of our exhortations, but this in my opinion would be no disadvantage. A few words fitly spoken, may be of more use than many long discourses;—besides, long exhortations both tend to discourage young beginners, and prevent those who might be inclined to engage in this duty, from having an opportunity for want of time.

Second, Speak the Word of God with solemnity and reverence. It is the character of the Lord's people that they tremble at his Word.* This ought not only to be the disposition of your minds, but should also be visible in your appearance, and manner of speaking. A hasty and irreverent method of speech, like a schoolboy repeating his lesson, or even a careless posture of the body, is very unbecoming, when you are employed in calling our attention to the Word of God.

The wise man gives us this necessary caution:—"Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready

* Ezra ix. 4. Isa. xlvi. 2. Psal. cxix. 120.

to hear, than to give the sacrifice of fools; for they consider not that they do evil. Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few."* You will easily perceive, that such a deep impression of the majesty and holiness of God, and such earnest care about the propriety of what we say before him, as is here enjoined, will be accompanied with a serious and deliberate manner of address, suited to the importance of what we are engaged in, and expressive of our highest veneration for the name of God. The directions here given, are commonly understood to apply only to our approaches unto God in prayer. But Solomon had more in view than this. The prohibition of rash vows, under that dispensation, was one thing principally intended, as appears from verse 4, and what he says was suited to regulate the whole of our deportment in the house of God. Doubtless we ought in a particular manner to attend to his instructions, when employed in the duty of prayer, which, as it is an immediate approach unto God, must be owned to be a more solemn and important duty than speaking to one another. But he also directs us in general how to behave in the house of God, and in all that we utter before him; and you will be the more enabled to comply with what he requires, if both in public prayers,† and in speaking as the oracles of God, you attend to that part of the exhortation, "therefore let thy words be few."

Third, Speak the Word of God with humility. The gospel, if it has any proper influence upon our minds, must humble us, not only in the sight of God, but also in regard to one another. Thus all of us are exhorted to be subject one to another, and to be clothed with humility, from this consideration, God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.‡ If then we are clothed with humility, it must surely appear in our way of exhorting the brethren, as well as in every thing else. Do not speak in that overbearing and dictatorial style, which always disgusts, and therefore cannot be supposed to edify. Avoid unbecoming forwardness, and assume such an air and manner as bespeaks your submission to the brethren. The language of entreaty is most effectual, as well as most becoming among Christians, and to this we are exhorted, 1 Tim. v. 1, 2. "Rebuke not an elder, but entreat him as a father, and the younger men as brethren; the elder women as mothers, the younger as sisters, with all purity."

Our pride may also appear in cavilling about words, making

* Eccles. v. 1, 2. † Matt. vi. 7, 8.
‡ 1 Pet. v. 7. See also, Rom. xii. 10. Philip. ii. 3.

a great noise about things which have no relation either to the faith or practice of Christians, and being too fond of our own opinions. Of such persons the Apostle says, "That they are proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, destitute of the truth, &c.* And he gives frequent cautions against every thing of this sort, in his Epistles to Timothy and Titus.† I do not blame any of the brethren at present for a spirit of this kind; but let us just think how unbecoming it would be in a man to stand up and speak to his brethren that truth by which the pride of man is abased, with an air of self-sufficiency, conceited of his own opinion, and more careful to recommend himself than the truth. We all know how we would feel upon such an occasion; indignation against the man would be more prevalent in our minds, than joy in the truth which he might declare. But brethren, we are all too much disposed naturally to be proud of our own wisdom and knowledge, and we are more apt to discern appearances of this kind in others than in ourselves. Let us therefore have a guard upon our spirits. When you exhort us, speak not as if you thought yourselves possessed of great knowledge; for the Apostle says, if any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know.‡ Think much of the truth, but little of yourselves, or of your manner of declaring it

Fourth, Exhort with sincerity and simplicity. Much is said about this in the Word of God; it is a very essential part of the character of a Christian, and without it no man deserves the name. In nothing are Christians more distinguished from the world, than in that simplicity and sincerity of speech and conduct, which the Scriptures recommend. How many professions of friendship are made in the world, which have nothing in them? They are mere words of course, or perhaps meant to ensnare and betray. But let it not be so among you. In all your conduct, follow his example in whose lips no guile was found. Attention to this is particularly necessary in speaking the truth. It was the rejoicing of the Apostles, "that, in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, they had their conversation in the world, and more abundantly towards the brethren."‖ And Titus is exhorted, in doctrine to show uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity.§ When you exhort us, speak the real sentiments of your hearts,

* 1 Tim. vi. 4, 5. † 1 Tim. iv. 7, 8. 2 Tim. ii. 16, 17, 23. Tit. i. 10—15. Chap. iii. 9. ‡ 1 Cor. viii. 2. ‖ 2 Cor. i. 12. § Tit. ii. 7. See, too, the example of Paul, 2 Cor. iv. 2. 1 Thess. ii. 3.

and in a way that is altogether unaffected and sincere. Make no professions of love but what are genuine; for we are commanded to love without dissimulation,* to love one another *with pure hearts* fervently ;† express no concern for us but what is real, no desire to edify and comfort us but what you feel.

Do not put any forced meaning upon the Word of God, or wrest the Scripture to answer any purpose of your own; but set it forth in its plain, simple, and natural meaning. Candidly give place to it upon all occasions, even when it seems to contradict your preconceived opinions, and thus show an example of the power of that Word on your own minds, which you wish to enforce upon us. In speaking of the great things of God, use not the words which man's wisdom teacheth; for though by this you may intend to adorn the truth, you will really spoil it. The gospel is a plain and simple declaration of the mercy of God to sinners: it is expressed in such language as is familiar to the most unlearned: it scorns the aid of man's wisdom, and can only be profitably spoken in language similar to its own.‡

Further, in regard to insincerity, beware that it does not take place as to the motives by which you are actuated in speaking. We all profess to do so with a view to glorify God, and to edify one another; but our hearts are deceitful, and our motives are often base, while our words, and even our actions may be good. See that your aim be not that of pleasing men; for this would be seeking your own glory, and not the glory of God. The Apostle says, "We speak, not as pleasing men, but God, who trieth our hearts."‖ This was a noble saying, and it would be well for us if we could always adopt it with sincerity. In connection with this, attend to what immediately follows, "For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloak of covetousness, God is witness." As to the latter of these you will not be much in danger; but beware of flattering us, for this can only tend to feed our pride, and to show your want of sincerity.

If, according to the example just referred to, you sincerely wished to speak, not as pleasing men, but God, who trieth our hearts, this would in a great measure banish that slavish fear which now prevents some of you from attempting to please God in this way. I do not say that it is wrong to endeavour to please your brethren, if you do it for their good to edification; but why should a fear of displeasing them, prevent you

* Rom. xii. 9. † 1 Pet. i. 22.
‡ 1 Cor. i. 17. Chap. ii. 1, 4, 13. ‖ 1 Thess. ii. 4.

from doing your duty both to God and them? Examine into the bottom of this motive. Whatever excuses may be made on account of peoples' natural timidity, you will find something wrong in it. If your minds were properly exercised, you would surely be more afraid of displeasing God than your fellow-men. Does this appear to be the case, when you can live in the neglect of a duty which he hath commanded, because you are afraid that the brethren will not approve of your attempts to perform it? If you say that you are not qualified for performing this duty, then the fear of offending God should prevent you, and not the fear of men. Now, which of these preponderates? Is it a fear of sinning against God that prevents you from exhorting, or a fear of not acquitting yourselves with approbation before men? The first of these is an excellent motive, but I am afraid that in the case now before us it has little influence with some; indeed, it would be wrong to suppose that the true fear of God could operate in the way of preventing his people from doing his will.

Lastly, Exhort with affection, fervour, and zeal. In order to this, it is necessary that your own minds should be deeply affected with the important things revealed in the Word of God, and that you should speak what you feel and experience. Do not satisfy yourselves merely with a persuasion that you know and believe the truth: those who do so, must not only feel its power to enlighten their minds, but to fill them with joy unspeakable and full of glory, with love and gratitude to God, with zeal and activity in his service; in short, their whole heart and soul must be engaged in the religion of Christ, and suitably moved by whatever he hath said to his disciples. Let this *appear* by your lively, affectionate, and zealous manner of exhorting us. Are we not, brethren, all deeply interested in the things you say? The life of our souls is in them; but however important these things are in themselves, you may make them little felt by your manner of speaking them. If you speak so as scarcely to be heard, or set forth the doctrines and commandments of Jesus in a drawling and insipid manner, how are you to expect that we can be much affected by your exhortations? The most affecting circumstance may appear, just by the manner of telling it, an uninteresting trifle, and we can scarcely listen to the cool relater. The best news, or the most entertaining and eventful story, in the mouth of him who speaks with indifference, will only tend to make hearers yawn. Such things happen in common life; but what a pity is it that they should take place among Christians, who have things to speak of, infinitely more important than all that can otherwise affect the hearts and pas-

sions of men? Be assured, however, that the cases are parallel. The truth of God indeed is always the same, however it may be spoken, and will edify and comfort the souls of the disciples; but dry, formal, and careless speeches about it, will never do so.

To hear one speak with cool indifference about the dangers we are exposed to, or the enjoyments we have in Christ, has surely no tendency to alarm us, or fill us with joy. Suppose you tell a man that the next house is on fire, and that he must instantly remove or be burnt to death, if you should say this just in the same way as you would speak of any common occurrence, without the least appearance of concern, would he believe you? Would he not wait for another messenger, or go himself, with no great agitation, to see if what you said were true? Again, were you to be a messenger of the most joyful news to a friend, and tell him, *in the same careless manner*, of something greatly to the advantage of him and his family, would he not either think that you were not interested in his welfare, or that you did not yourself believe what you told him?

These things may well be applied to the subject in hand, especially in regard to unbelievers hearing what we have to say respecting the gospel: they will no doubt think that we do not believe those things ourselves, which, though we speak about them, do not seem to affect us;* and who can blame them for thinking so? Our own minds would be uneasy on the very same ground, were it not that we have learned to judge differently of this sort of evidence; making large allowance for bad habits, and the influence of a false principle, which has some way crept in to all kinds of Congregational Churches in this

* Let it be carefully observed, that we do not mean to affirm, that in speaking of the gospel, in the most lively and affecting manner, is of itself a sufficient evidence that we are the true disciples of Christ; nor do we say that other things are not still more essential and important. The highest attainments of this kind may be possessed by those who are destitute of love; for, says the Apostle, "Though I speak with the tongues of men, and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal." † That is, I may please and edify others, but cannot profit myself; like a musical instrument, which gratifies those who listen to it, without being conscious of its own charms. We are not however to imagine, that the Apostle throws a stigma upon this, or the other attainments, and outward expressions of love, which he mentions in the context, such as, having all knowledge and faith, and giving all our goods to feed the poor; for it is evident that the want of love itself, is that alone which he condemns. There may be striking appearances of love without the reality, but there can be no reality without the appearance.

† 1 Cor. xiii. 1.

country. They were right in condemning the empty show, and false appearances of zeal and fervour, which have been displayed by many of the national clergy; but, as it has happened with many other things, they have carried this also to an extreme, and very improperly reckon it a crime to speak the truth *in love*, or to show, in the performance of this duty, any striking outward marks of that fervent love to Christ and his people, which must fill the heart of every believer.

As to the particular things whereby our earnestness and affection should be made visible, let it be observed, that every thing about a man tends to show us what is in his mind, if he is upright and sincere. The manner of speech is the principal thing; but the appearance of the speaker ought also to coincide with this; for a man addresses us not only by his words, but by his eyes, attitude, air, and motion. Speak therefore *to your audience;* look them in the face, and do not fix your eyes on the walls of the meeting-house, or the book in your hand; let your appearance indicate the concern or joy you feel; speak to us in a frank, open, and unreserved way, like a man addressing his friends on any thing materially connected with their welfare; let your address be often personal, though modest, humble, and unaffected. I have sometimes thought, when a brother was exhorting, that the Church were precisely in the same situation as if they were in another room, overhearing something said, but not to them. It is not enough that you should now and then address them as "brethren," if the general strain of what you say does not correspond with such an address.

Some of you will perhaps think that these things are of little importance, and that the Scripture says nothing about them. It appears however to me, that the very nature of the truth itself directs to all that hath been said; and did not our Lord tell his disciples, that out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh?* This surely applies to our manner of speech, as well as to the things we say: that which mainly occupies a man's heart and affections, will not only be often spoken of, but spoken of in such a manner as to show that his heart and soul are in it.

I shall now mention a few Scripture examples which appear to me exactly in point. The first is the most illustrious: it is the example of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, to which I doubt not you will pay the utmost deference. Of him it is frequently noticed that he *looked round about* on those to whom he spoke, sometimes with love and pity, sometimes with anger and indignation, according as the nature of the subject, or the

* Matt. xii. 34, 35.

behaviour of men, was suited to move his holy soul.* It is likewise more than once said of him that he *cried*, when he preached the gospel to men:† "Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." Was not this a striking outward expression of the fervency of his spirit in preaching the gospel, and his earnest desire for the salvation of sinners? When he was in the synagogue at Nazareth, he read a prophecy concerning himself,‡ and it is noticed that the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him when he had only read the Scripture, and sat down. Now, what could this be owing to? Surely they must have been taken with his inviting aspect, and the solemnity and affection with which he read the Word of God; for they did not understand the Scripture which he had read. The same thing probably contributed in part afterwards, to make them wonder at the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth; for he no doubt spoke to them in a gracious manner. I should likewise imagine, that the officers sent by the Pharisees and chief priests to take him, must have been struck with his appearance and manner of speech, when they gave this as the reason of their not apprehending him, Never man spake like this man.‖

Do you think there would be no marks of indignation in his countenance and manner of address, when he said to his disciples, "O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you?"§ Or when he said to Peter, "Get thee behind me, Satan, thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men."¶ Was there no expression in his eye, when a look from him made Peter go out and weep bitterly?** Did not grief appear in his countenance when he wept over the city of Jerusalem, and expressed these mournful words, recorded in Luke xix. 42, 43, 44,†† "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in, on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation?" And were there no signs of joy to be seen about him, when he rejoiced in spirit, and said, "I thank thee O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise

* Mark iii. 5. Chap. x. 23, 27. Luke vi. 10.
† John vii. 37, and xii. 44. ‡ Luke iv. 16. &c.
‖ John vii. 46. § Matt. xvii. 17. ¶ Matt. xvi. 23.
** Luke xxii. 61, 62. †† See also, Luke xiii. 33—35.

and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight?"*

Instances of this kind might be multiplied both from the history of Christ and his Apostles; but I shall only farther take notice of a few things recorded of Paul. When he preached the gospel in the synagogue at Antioch, it is said of him, "Then Paul stood up, and beckoning with the hand, said, Men of Israel, and ye that fear God, give audience."† This was surely an open, pointed, and inviting manner of address: throughout the whole of the discourse, his language is personal, striking, and affectionate, in the highest degree. "Men and brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, and whosoever among you feareth God, to you is the word of this salvation sent.—We declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise that was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children. Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins." And the same personal address is made use of in the awful warning given them at the end, "Beware therefore, lest that come upon you which is spoken of in the prophets; Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish; for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you." If you look through the sermons preached by the Apostles in general, you will find them much alike in this respect, and also the epistles written to the churches. Nay, I will venture to affirm that, in all the Word of God, there cannot be found so much as one instance of a person addressing men about the things of God, in a way that does not resemble this, in the particulars we have mentioned.

The same method of address was practised by Paul in the defences he made before his enemies. One of them begins thus, "Men, brethren, and fathers, hear ye my defence."‡ At another time he is represented in this way, "Paul *earnestly beholding* the council, said, Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day."‖ His speech to king Agrippa is still more remarkable in this view.§ On that occasion it is said of him, "Then Paul stretched forth the hand, and answered for himself: I think myself happy, king Agrippa, because I shall answer for myself this day before thee," &c. When he begins to relate what befell him in his way to Damascus, he again addresses himself to Agrippa, "At mid-day, O king, I saw a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun." Further, when beginning his description of

* Luke x. 21. † Acts xiii. 16. ‡ Acts xxii. 1.
‖ Acts xxiii. 1. § Acts xxvi.

the effects produced upon him by seeing the Just One, and hearing the voice of his mouth, he says, "Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision." After Festus had interrupted and reviled him, and he had replied to him in a respectful, yet bold and determined manner, "I am not mad, most noble Festus, but speak forth the words of truth and soberness;" appealing also to the king for the truth of the facts which he had testified, and declaring that he spoke freely before him, he again turns to Agrippa, and says, "King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest." Whether the partial conviction expressed by Agrippa in these words, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian," was the effect of the truth declared by Paul, or of the energy with which he spoke, or both, it is not material to determine; but nothing could be more emphatical, or more expressive of disinterested benevolence, than the answer made by Paul, "I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds."

I cannot attempt to enumerate the various expressions of this Apostle's love to his brethren in Christ: to some of whom he says, "God is my record how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ."* To others, "Now we live if ye stand fast in the Lord. For what thanks can we render to God again for you, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God; night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your face, and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith."† And even to those who were ungrateful among them, he says, "I will very gladly spend and be spent for you, though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved."‡ It would be unnecessary to give you many instances of his manner of addressing himself to the churches. With these you must be well acquainted; and you cannot look into any of his epistles, without seeing abundant evidence in every page, that he dealt much in that familiar, intimate, and personal style, which is the natural effusion of love. The following may therefore suffice as a specimen of the language of entreaty often used by him, when exhorting his brethren to the duties incumbent on them as Christians. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."‖ "Now, I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing,

* Philip i. 8.
† 1 Thess. iii. 8—10.
‡ 2 Cor. xii. 15.
‖ Rom. xii. 1.

and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment."* "If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies: fulfil ye my joy, that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind."† "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you, that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called: with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."‡ "Therefore, my brethren, dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved."‖ "We have great joy and consolation in thy love, because the bowels of the saints are refreshed by thee, brother. Wherefore, though I might be much bold in Christ to enjoin thee that which is convenient, yet, for love's sake, I rather beseech thee, being such an one as Paul the aged, and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ. I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds:—Thou therefore receive him that is mine own bowels:—Yea, brother, let me have joy of thee in the Lord: refresh my bowels in the Lord. Having confidence in thy obedience, I wrote unto thee, knowing that thou wilt also do more than I say."§ You may also take the following as a specimen of his way of addressing their consciences, when he meant to impress upon their minds a due sense of their danger, and to move them with fear: "Thou standest by faith. Be not high-minded, but fear: for if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee."¶ "If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy: for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are."** "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived."†† "If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die."‡‡ "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption: but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting."‖‖ "Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. Be not ye therefore partakers with them."§§

When we consider the lively zeal by which this Apostle was actuated, and his earnest desire for the salvation of sinners,

* 1 Cor. i. 10. † Philip. ii. 1. ‡ Ephes. iv. 1—3.
‖ Philip. iv. 1. § Philemon, ver. 7—10, 12, 20, 21.
¶ Rom. xi. 20, 21. ** 1 Cor. iii. 17. †† 1 Cor. vi. 9.
‡‡ Rom. viii. 13, ‖‖ Gal. vi. 7, 8. §§ Ephes. v. 6, 7.

and the edification of the churches, so often expressed in his writings, it would be quite unnatural to suppose that his outward appearance and manner did not bear evident marks of the fervency of his spirit. Read the second chapter of his first Epistle to the Thessalonians throughout.—At verse 8th, he says, " So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us." Is it possible, think you, that the man who could utter these words with sincerity, could at the same time appear dry, unanimated, or careless, in preaching the gospel? Would not his very looks, as well as his words, convince the Thessalonians that he could even impart unto them his soul?

Upon the whole, brethren, I reckon this to be a subject of very great importance. Your attention to the things that have been spoken, will contribute greatly to our edification : your neglect of them will mar it. I believe none will have any objection to what has been said as to the matter of exhortation ; but as to the manner of it, some perhaps may not be altogether satisfied, this being rather a new doctrine among us. I am only sorry that it should be so, and hope that it will be more attended to in future, on account of its having been so long neglected. I shall now endeavour to answer some of the most material objections which have been urged against some of the rules I have laid down.

First, " The rules are too nice, it will be difficult to follow them, and the brethren will be prevented from speaking at all, lest they should not do it in a proper manner."

As to the nicety of the rules, I have only to say that they are all agreeable to the nature of the truth, and to the Scripture examples which have been adduced already. They are quite natural, and for this reason cannot be nice or difficult. All that is pleaded for, is just the natural expression of what a man feels ; why then should any be discouraged, except those who do not really feel the power of the truth? of which number I hope there are none among us. Were I to tell you, that when you go to visit the sick, it would be improper to sit down and look around you in a careless manner, and speak only about the trifles of the day : that your words and looks should be kind and affectionate, your conversation such as has a tendency to comfort, and all your deportment expressive of your love, sympathy, and care : would you say that I meant to hinder you from visiting the sick, or that an exhortation of this kind had any such tendency? The conclusion would be equally unfair in the one case as in the other.

Second, " Every one is not capable of speaking in a lively and

pathetic manner, however much they may be under the practical influence of the truth. Some are prevented by their very constitution and frame of mind, from being deeply affected with any thing; and others cannot, on account of their natural timidity and backwardness, express what they really feel."

It is certainly true that there is a great variety in the constitution and frame of the human mind, and on many accounts it cannot be expected that every one should be able to speak the truth with the same degree of zeal, and fervent love: this is not supposed, in any thing that has been said upon the subject. Yet surely you must be convinced that it is the duty, and would be the privilege, of every one who exhorts his brethren, to be under the full influence and power of what he says; and when this is the case, that it is natural for him to show by outward signs the fervency of his spirit. We may often come short of this, but it does not on this account cease to be our duty. Whatever may be said about natural defects and infirmities, which no doubt prevent some from appearing so lively and affectionate as others, there is no man incapable of being visibly affected with the important concerns of this life; and there are none so timid and backward, as to be always prevented from expressing their grief or joy to those in whom they can confide. Now we are surely to expect that the gospel will have a more powerful influence in these respects, than the most important worldly concerns. If it is otherwise, we give no proper evidence that we really believe it.

Third, "This method of address is too assuming, and does not suit with that lowliness of mind, and subjection one to another, which is highly becoming among Christians, and often recommended in the Word of God. It may perhaps be allowable for teachers to speak to us in a personal and earnest manner; but if the brethren in general were to do so, they might justly be considered as stepping out of their sphere, and assuming an authority to which they are not entitled."

It is admitted that there may be a danger of something of this kind, particularly in those who are naturally of a keen and forward disposition; or when the outward appearance and manner is studied, without being solicitous to cultivate such a state of mind, as would naturally produce all that we are pleading for. In this case, it will be very awkward to attempt it, and those who do so, will appear affected, and perhaps dictatorial, and overbearing. But how it should be imagined, that this is necessarily connected with the genuine expressions of fervent love, in the most familiar and personal manner of address, I cannot comprehend. It must be evident at first sight, that love to the souls of our brethren, and the appearance of this

which may be evinced in our manner of speaking to them respecting the gospel, are not only consistent with lowliness of mind, but cannot subsist without it; as you will see from these characteristics of love given us by the Apostle. "Charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own." *

It is not unlikely that a mistake about what I have endeavoured to urge upon you, may give rise to this objection. Perhaps you may think that fine language, and a formal studied manner of speech, or what one would call a preaching style, is that which is intended. This is by no means the case. I would have every man to speak in a way that is perfectly natural, and as he would do in a pathetic conversation, when the important truths of the gospel warm his heart, and lead him, almost without design, to express himself in a striking, lively, and affectionate manner. When this is done with simplicity and godly sincerity; your self-diffidence and humility will be as conspicuous as your love and zeal.

Fourth, "This is making too much to depend on our manner of speaking, and derogating from the power of the truth itself, which does not stand in need of human aid, and can only be made effectual by the Spirit of God."

This is perhaps one of the most specious objections that could be urged; yet it will not be difficult to show that it is without foundation. I acknowledge that, in regard to the preaching of the gospel, the Apostle sets aside the means which human wisdom would devise, such as, enticing words of man's wisdom,† deceit and guile,‡ flattering words,‖ and all that is suited to please and gratify the natural inclinations of men;§ and he ascribes the effects produced by the gospel solely to the wisdom and the power of God.¶ It is necessary to pay the strictest attention to this in exhorting one another. But though the Apostle discards worldly wisdom, flattery, and deceit, where does he set aside zeal and fervour, in those who are appointed to preach the gospel, or in brethren speaking to one another about the things of God? Does he not, on the contrary, give a striking example of this in himself, as we have already seen?** And does he not also recommend it to others?††

It is quite wrong to imagine, that because the power of God

* 1 Cor. xiii. 4, 5. † 1 Cor. 1, 17, and ii. 1, 4. ‡ 1 Thess. ii. 3.
‖ 1 Thess. ii. 5. § 1 Thess. ii. 4.
¶ 1 Cor. i. 17, to the end. Chap. ii. throughout. Chap. iii. 6. 2 Cor. iv. 7. Chap. x. 4. 5.
** Pages 24, 25. †† Acts xx. 17—36. 2 Tim. iv. 2, 5.

is alone sufficient to edify his people by means of his word and ordinances, that we have therefore nothing to do in regard to this matter. If so, what would be the use of being connected together in a church, and attending upon ordinances? We might as well read the Word of God at home, as solitary individuals, and expect in this way to be built up in our most holy faith; which is opposite to the whole spirit of the New Testament. Let us follow out this objection, and see where it leads to. There are many duties expressly enjoined upon us in the Word of God, which must all be set aside, if we give place to it in its full extent. For instance, we are exhorted to warn the unruly, to comfort the feeble-minded, and to support the weak;* but what need is there for such injunctions, if the Word is able to produce these effects, without relation to any means used by us? May not the unruly be suffered to go on till the Word of God correct them? May not the feeble-minded droop and languish, till they find comfort to themselves; and the weak fall before their enemies, till they meet with strength and support by their own attention to the Word of God?—When our brother trespasses against us, we are commanded to go and tell him his fault. If he will not hear us, then we must take with us one or two more, to enforce our admonition, and to be witnesses of his behaviour. If he shall neglect to hear them, we must tell it unto the church, that he may likewise be admonished by them, and if possible reclaimed. But if he neglect to hear the church, he must be unto us as an heathen man, and a publican.† Now, is not this directing us to a variety of means for the purpose of reclaiming an offending brother? And does not the objection make all this unnecessary, while it proceeds upon the supposition that the Word of God alone, ought to convince our brother of his fault, without any endeavours on our part to bring him to repentance? If it shall be said, that no doubt we must in such cases make use of the Word of God, but that little or nothing depends on our *manner* of doing so, provided we bring forward Scriptures suited to the purpose we have in view; the opposite of this will also appear from the instances that have just been mentioned. Would you comfort the feeble-minded, and support the weak, in the same manner as you would warn the unruly? Or could you expect to convince a brother of his fault, if you should attack him with such violence or ill humour, as might justly lead him to think that personal resentment, and not love to his soul, was the cause of your dealing with him? If, notwithstanding this, he were still reclaimed, which no doubt might be the case, I should most

* 1 Thess. v. 14. † Matt. xviii. 15—17.

readily acknowledge that it was owing, not to your endeavours, but to the Word of God alone.

The Lord makes use of means suited to bring about the ends he has in view: and one of the means which he has appointed for our edification and comfort, is the duty we have been considering. When you perform it in a suitable manner, and give evidence that the word of Christ dwells richly in your hearts, as well as in your judgments, is not this the work of God? And must not all the good effects produced by your doing so, be ascribed to him *who worketh all in all?* * How then can this be said to derogate from the power of the truth, or set aside the effectual working of the Spirit of God? In so far as you come short of what has just been mentioned, you hinder the truth from appearing in its native beauty and excellency. Can this have any tendency to obviate the objection, and to show that the Word of God is quick and powerful? Do we not rather give evidence of its power, by the very thing against which the objection is levelled?

I shall now conclude with observing, that I do not expect to see any of the brethren always come up to the rules that have been laid down, nor am I at all persuaded that I have done so myself, or that I shall always do so in future. Alas! brethren, our hearts are often too little affected by the gospel of Christ to enable us to speak with affection, fervour, and zeal, and we may often be conscious also of much insincerity, pride, and hypocrisy: but these things are sinful; let us strive against them, and pray to the God of hope, that he would fill us with all joy and peace in believing, that we may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Spirit. Then shall we exhort one another with sincere and unaffected fervour of spirit, and make it appear to our brethren that we are under the lively impressions of things unseen and eternal. This is what I anxiously desire; and if my endeavours, under the blessing of God, shall in any measure contribute to this end, I shall rejoice, and give him the glory.

* 1 Cor. xii. 11.

END OF THE DISCOURSE.

PARENTAL DUTIES

ILLUSTRATED FROM THE WORD OF GOD;

IN THREE DISCOURSES.

THE THIRD EDITION,
ENLARGED AND CORRECTED BY THE AUTHOR.

"Train up a child in the way (in which) he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it."—SOLOMON.

FIRST PUBLISHED IN MDCCXCII.

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

An octavo edition of the following Discourses was published in 1792, and is now disposed of. It has been thought proper to reprint them in this form, that they might be afforded at such a price as will suit the convenience of every purchaser.

Several Scotticisms, and other improprieties in style, have been corrected; but the author, who does not lay claim to literary talents, supposes that in this respect he may still have left room for criticism. Some allowance however will be made for imperfections of this nature, if he has succeeded in his main design, which is to state, in a simple, accurate, and convincing manner, the doctrine of the Scriptures concerning the education of children. He earnestly wishes to call the attention of Christian parents to the duties which they owe to their children, and to urge upon them the motives by which these duties are enforced in the Word of God; particularly the assurance which is given, to a certain extent, THAT SUCCESS WILL INFALLIBLY ATTEND THEIR LABOURS.

A father who doubts the truth of this, will not sufficiently exert himself in training his children. The deficiency of his parental care may be demonstrated by the habitual irregularity of their conduct; but it is consistent with his principles to impute all their faults to other causes, and he will be at no loss to find excuses for his own negligence. Indeed, he could not be justly blamed for neglect of duty, if he wanted either ability or opportunity to perform it. The Word of God does not prescribe duties, which are rendered impracticable by any circumstance whatever, except the ignorance or aversion of those on whom they are enjoined.

A few remarks, which were thought necessary for the further illustration of some important points, have been added to the Discourses.

Edinburgh, October 17, 1796.

DISCOURSE I.

"And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath; but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."—Eph. vi. 4.

I have endeavoured, on some former occasions, to explain and enforce the relative duties enjoined in the preceding context on wives, husbands, and children; and the next in course are those which are incumbent on parents. Attention to all these duties is highly necessary for your own peace, for the happiness of those with whom you are connected, and for the honour of the Christian profession. But parental duties are singularly important, as the happiness of children, during the whole course of their lives, is intimately connected with their education in youth; and the conduct of parents not only affects the present generation, but extends its influence to future ages. Those of you who are parents ought therefore to consider, with the most serious attention, every thing that relates to this interesting subject.

In the text, the Apostle addresses himself particularly to *Fathers*, as he does also in a similar exhortation to the Colossians, "Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged."* And this shows that the care of young children is not entirely devolved on mothers; that bringing them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord is a matter of great importance, worthy of the most careful attention of fathers; and that no hurry of business, nor any concerns in which they may be engaged, can be admitted as an excuse for negligence in this duty. This also appears from its being made an essential qualification in a bishop, or overseer of a church of Christ, to have "his children in subjection with all gravity,"† and to have "faithful children, not accused of

* Col. iii. 21. † 1 Tim. iii. 4.

riot, or unruly." * Deacons also must be such men as "rule their children and their own houses well." † And if this is essential to the characters of all the office-bearers in churches, it must be a necessary thing in itself, and incumbent on every Christian father.

This exhortation may also be addressed to fathers, because they have naturally more authority than mothers, and it is their province to take the lead in the government of their families. In many other respects the care of children, especially in their infant state, is chiefly devolved on the female sex. But it should be considered, that "the man is the head of the woman; he is the image and glory of God, but the woman is the glory of the man;" and on this ground she is commanded to submit to her husband; ‡ from which it necessarily follows, that ruling children, and having them in subjection, though incumbent on both parents, is more especially the duty of the man, who in distinction from the woman is formed for the exercise of authority. He, too, is most in danger of going to the extreme of severity, and therefore peculiarly needs this caution, "Provoke not your children to wrath."

We must not, however, understand that mothers are excluded here, and that they are not to blame if they either "provoke their children to wrath," or neglect to "bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." There is no reason to doubt, though fathers only are mentioned, that both parents are intended, and have their different parts assigned them in this important charge. In the nature of the thing, it must be so: for mothers have an equal concern in the welfare of their children: and we see, from the foregoing part of the chapter, that honour and obedience are also due to them: "Children, obey your *parents* in the Lord. Honour thy father and thy *mother*, which is the first commandment with promise."

We observe further, that the Apostle here addresses *Christian parents*, or those who professed to believe the gospel, and walked under its influence. This is plain from the way in which he characterises these Ephesians:—"The saints, and faithful in Christ Jesus—those whom the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ had blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ—chosen in him before the foundation of the world, that they should be holy and without blame before him in love ‖—quickened when dead in trespasses and sins, saved by the grace of God, through faith, and created in Christ Jesus unto good works." § Such persons, and such

* Tit. i. 6. † 1 Tim. iii. 12. ‡ 1 Cor. xi. 3, 7—10. Eph. v. 22—24.
‖ Eph. i. 1—5. § Eph. ii. 1, 5, 8, 10.

only, are addressed in all the epistles to the churches; and we ought to consider the necessity of having Christian principles, before we can perform, in an acceptable manner, any of those duties which are enjoined on the followers of Christ.

The exhortation which is given in the text to believing parents, not only regards their treatment of such of their children as make the Christian profession, but likewise extends to all their children. They are all under the charge of their parents from infancy, and are thus to be brought up before they are capable of professing the faith; and although they should advance towards maturity without the saving knowledge of the truth, that is no reason why parents should be remiss in the duties here enjoined. They ought rather, in that case, to be the more anxious to instruct and warn them, to the utmost of their power.

It does not appear to me, that nurture, considered in the light of bodily chastisement, suits the case of believing children, however young. We must deal with the consciences of such, as persons subject to the authority of God, and under the influence of the motives of the gospel: and if they are so refractory as to merit chastisement with the rod, they will deserve also to be excluded from the fellowship of a church of Christ.

There are two extremes in the conduct of parents towards their children. Some are too severe, and by an unlawful stretch of authority provoke their children to wrath, and discourage them. Others are too indulgent, from a mistaken sort of love and tenderness, which, on account of its baneful consequences, deserves the name of hatred. They have no proper authority or government; they seldom teach their children with effect, or chastise them to any good purpose; and consequently neither restrain their follies nor their vices. We shall speak to each of these classes: and it is the more necessary, as the same persons often err in both ways; for it may frequently be observed, that parents who have no proper uniform authority, are upon some occasions the most arbitrary and severe.

The following are the particulars that we mean to illustrate and enforce:—

I. The prohibition expressed in these words, "provoke not your children to wrath."

II. The commandment, to "bring them up in the nurture of the Lord."

III. The commandment, to "bring them up in the admonition of the Lord."

IV. We shall then take notice of some motives and encouragements, which are suited to animate Christian parents to the faithful discharge of these duties.

I. Let us attend to the import of the prohibition, "Provoke not your children to wrath." Parents are taught by this, to avoid all harsh and cruel treatment, and to beware of indulging their own pride and humour, instead of seeking the real advantage and happiness of their children. In every case wherein the Word of God makes it lawful and proper to exercise authority, it is intended not to gratify the ambition of those to whom it is committed, but for the good of those whose duty it is to be in subjection, and for the benefit of society in general, which cannot subsist without subordination. It is so in kingdoms as well as families; for civil governors are appointed "for the punishment of evil doers, and for the praise of them that do well;"* and all who are vested with power and authority, are answerable to God for the use they make of it. Thus masters are commanded to "forbear threatening, knowing that their Master also is in heaven, neither is there respect of persons with him."† This is a solemn consideration, which ought to overawe the minds of parents, and make them anxious to avoid all undue severity.

The prohibition implies,

First, That you ought never to exercise arbitrary and despotic authority, either in the way of commanding, finding fault, chastising, or any thing else. This is done by some parents with a view to inure their children to contradiction and disappointment; but the experiment is dangerous and unnecessary, as there will be many opportunities of contradicting them, when duty absolutely requires it. There is no child who will not frequently have desires which ought not to be gratified, or who will always cheerfully yield his own humour and inclination to the will of his superiors; and if there were such children, it would be most unreasonable to contradict them.

It is true indeed, that children, when they are very young, cannot always discern the reasons why they ought to do one thing and refrain from another, and must therefore, in their apprehension, be under a sort of arbitrary government for a time; and it is proper they should in all things implicitly submit to the will of their parents. When a father commands, this is sufficient, and he ought immediately to be obeyed. But though he may not find it necessary, or even possible on all occasions, to explain the reasons of his conduct, he ought certainly to have

* 1 Pet. ii. 14. † Eph. vi. 9.

a good reason in his own mind for all that he commands. He should, on proper occasions, make his children to understand why he requires and prohibits this and the other thing, and never take it amiss when he is discreetly asked to give his reason.

We ought to deal with children as rational creatures, not merely with the force of authority, but in the way of addressing often their judgment and conscience. It is very possible to convince them of the propriety of many things that are opposite to their natural inclinations; and we never can be sure of their uniform subjection and obedience, unless when they are convinced that the things we require of them are just and reasonable. If a contrary practice is followed, what is the consequence? Children will soon come to think for themselves: and what judgment are they to form of their parents, if they see them actuated by the spirit of despotic tyrants? Such behaviour must have a tendency to provoke them to wrath.

Second, Never refuse your children any thing that you can properly give them, if it is asked with submission and respect; and allow them such freedom in making known their requests, as will prevent them from feeling any restraint or uneasiness. It is a great mistake to imagine that it is any crime in children to ask what they have a right to receive, or that parents ought to keep them at such a distance as to render this irksome and disagreeable. If they seek any thing that would be hurtful to them, if their demand shows a disposition which ought to be checked, or if they ask in a fretful, peevish, or imperious manner, by all means let them be refused: but how an affectionate parent can refuse them any thing, *merely because they ask it*, is more than I am able to conceive. Their natural wants, and what is necessary for their comfort and happiness, ought to be attended to, whether they ask such things or not; and surely when they request what parents at any rate are bound to give, this is no reason why they should be refused. I do not mean to say that children cannot offend by the frequency, unseasonableness, or impropriety of their demands, for there is not any one thing in which they are more ready to err; but only that parents ought not to refuse their requests, without having some reason for it beside their own arbitrary will, if they would not wish to provoke them to wrath.

Third, Be careful to avoid finding fault, or chastising, without a just and proper cause. Not that small offences are never to be attended to; for, in some cases, things that appear trifling in themselves are of great consequence, and must be checked. But make it an invariable rule not to show any displeasure against your children, till you are sure that they de-

serve it. Many allowances must be made for childhood, and many follies and improprieties are to be expected, which cannot properly be termed offences. There is a natural thoughtless gaiety, vivacity, and lightness of spirit in children, which ought not in general to be restrained. On some occasions, this lively and restless turn of mind may be irksome and inconvenient, and it will be necessary to lay upon them a temporary restraint when they are too noisy and turbulent; but they are not at all to blame for this. They only commit an offence in this respect, when they act avowedly in opposition to authority; and, at other times, they ought to be allowed to indulge that innocent mirth, and sprightly humour, which is suited to their years.

Nor ought they to be much condemned for accidents, which happen through that giddy thoughtlessness which we must expect to see in children. It is a matter of regret, when in this way they destroy things of value; but it is better to keep these out of their way, than to correct them for an accident, which probably could not be prevented by any foresight of which they are capable. It is yet more cruel to chastise them, when through inattention and thoughtless levity they hurt themselves. When children are in pain and distress, from whatever cause, they require sympathy rather than correction; and though it is exceedingly proper to teach them to avoid personal danger, and to beware of hurting others, or doing any harm through stupidity or inattention, this can only be done gradually by mild and gentle methods; and the want of that degree of care and reflection which we look for in adults, ought not to be considered as a crime in them.

All needless chiding has a tendency to provoke, and it is of great importance that you should understand what is the due medium of parental authority. There is a danger in both extremes, as we have already hinted. If you are rigorous and severe, you essentially hurt them; and if you are too indulgent, the effect is the same. How shall we avoid these extremes, and behave to our children so as to produce uniform respectful obedience without slavish fear? This can only be accomplished by observing such conduct as will always make them happy in your presence, unless when they are guilty of a real crime. If they are afraid, or under a disagreeable restraint when they do well, your treatment must be wrong; and it is equally so, if they can be guilty of any bad conduct without fear or uneasiness. An attentive parent will easily discern if either of these effects are produced by his behaviour; and I beg your particular attention to this observation, as the whole art of training children almost entirely depends upon it.

Were I to describe a good civil government by its effects, I would say, it is that government which protects the just, and enables them to live without the smallest apprehension of danger; and which punishes the wicked, and makes evil doers afraid. It is precisely the same in families as in nations, and you can never exercise that just authority which pleases God, unless when it is uniformly thus directed: the opposite is to punish well-doing, and to reward iniquity.

Fourth, When it becomes necessary to use severity, on account of any thing bad in the conduct of your children, which cannot be cured by gentle means, do it with judgment and moderation. Furious rebukes and angry blows have little tendency to reclaim; and those who cannot govern themselves, have no right to expect that they will be able to govern their children. In order to produce the good effects intended by chastisement, it is necessary to convince your children that they have given you a just ground of offence, that you have no delight in any thing that gives them pain, and that you chastise them for their own profit and advantage. A wise and affectionate parent will proceed to this hardest part of his duty with much reluctance, and will not even think it beneath him to confess to his child that he does it with regret.

It is proper indeed that you should show your displeasure according to the nature and demerit of the crime, and be firm and determined in all your attempts to subdue their perverse wills. If you yield the point, and do not bring them to a full submission, it would have been far better that you had never disputed it. But this end will be more successfully attained by temperate severity than by unreasonable violence; for however resolute a man may appear in the heat of passion, it is only when he is collected, and fully master of himself, that he can be supposed to express his real sentiments, and to lay down resolutions from which he will not recede. A parent may sometimes need to delay chastisement till his own anger is abated; and at other times this may be necessary, on account of the violent passions of some children, who are not to be overcome by any means, till their pride, anger, or resentment, get time to subside. It is better to exercise patience, than to use harsh methods with little or no probability of success.

Fifth, Beware of showing an unwarrantable partiality to any of your children, as it must have a bad effect on those of them against whom it operates, and cannot fail to provoke them to wrath, and discourage them. It frequently happens that there is one neglected child in a family, and very often one who is a particular favourite, and visibly preferred to all the rest. If we enquire into the cause of this, we shall find in general that

it is not founded in justice or reason, but can only be attributed to the whim and caprice of parents. The affection which nature dictates is universal, and the want of it in any case is pointedly condemned in the Word of God.* Yet we see some children overlooked, despised, and maltreated, merely perhaps for the want of personal accomplishments, or a deficiency in bright and shining talents, which the great Author of nature hath conferred on some, and denied to others. For these things, in which they are not in the least degree to blame, they are sunk below the level of their brothers and sisters, kept at a distance, and scarcely allowed in any respect to appear as children of the same family. The favourites, on the other hand, only because they are more beautiful or sprightly, or for some such foolish reason, are caressed and respected, and allowed to trample on one who ought to be accounted their equal. Can any thing be more absurd or unnatural?

Excuses are made for this guilty partiality, but no excuse can be admitted. Parents will tell us, that some children are so disagreeable and vicious in their natural inclinations, that they cannot love them; or if their partiality be shown by keeping them more meanly clothed than the rest of the family, and giving them more servile employment, they will say that it suits their inclination, and that it is entirely their own fault. But the difference, if there be any, for the most part arises, not from any thing peculiarly wicked in the nature of the child, but from the treatment of the parents, which is suited to produce a base and slavish spirit; and it is no uncommon thing to see the neglected child possessed of more amiable dispositions, and a greater share of good sense, than the rest of the family.

Parents may love their children in proportion to the goodness of their temper and conduct, without being guilty of partiality, which consists in showing an unjust and arbitrary preference. If the encouragement you give them is always according to their good behaviour, you cannot be considered as partial; but this is quite consistent with avoiding all such treatment as would make any of them despair of obtaining your approbation, or expose them to ill usage from the rest of the family.

You have doubtless seen melancholy instances, both of neglected children, who were broken-hearted, and rendered unfit for any purpose in life, or roused to the highest pitch of indignation and resentment; and of favourites, who were haughty, overbearing, and petulant. Observe then the bad effects of partiality, and be careful to avoid it, in its first beginnings

* 2 Tim. iii. 3.

Having thus explained the prohibition, and showed what sort of conduct parents ought to *avoid* in the treatment of their children, I now proceed,

II. To explain and enforce the commandment, to "bring up your children in the nurture of the Lord."

To nurture signifies to educate, train, or bring up; and when we take it in a large sense, includes chastisement, which is a necessary part of the education of children. The word translated *nurture*, is the same with that used in the twelfth chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, which is translated *chastisement*, and is explained by another term which signifies *to scourge;* it literally signifies the discipline of children. "My son, despise not thou the *chastening* of the Lord; for whom the Lord loveth he *chasteneth*, and *scourgeth* every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure *chastening*, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father *chasteneth* not? But if ye be without *chastisement*, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons." This commandment therefore implies necessary discipline and chastisement, and the Apostle calls it the discipline *of the Lord;* that discipline which he commands in his Word, which he exemplifies in his conduct towards his own children, and which he hath appointed for gracious and wise purposes. Parents are also commanded to continue in this discipline with constancy and perseverance; for he says, *bring them up* in the nurture of the Lord. Thus they are called to educate and bring up their children in the fear of God, under a sense of his authority, and as being accountable to him who will judge and reward his servants.

This nurture or discipline of the Lord, in which parents are commanded to bring up their children, is exceedingly beneficial, and very much suited to the state of childhood. It is often recommended, the reasons for it are assigned, and its good effects described, in the Book of Proverbs, as in the following passages:—"Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him.* Withhold not correction from the child; for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell.† The rod and reproof give wisdom; but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame. Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest; yea, he shall give delight unto thy soul.‡ Chasten thy son while

* Prov. xxii. 15. † Prov. xxiii. 13, 14.
‡ Prov. xxix. 15, 17.

there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying.* He that spareth his rod hateth his son; but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes." †

From these exhortations of the wise man, it appears that reproofs and chastisement are absolutely necessary, on account of that foolishness which is bound in the hearts of children. By *foolishness* we are not to understand merely the want of wisdom, which is not indeed to be expected at an early period of life. This, however, is a good reason for having children under authority and government. They ought to be entirely regulated by the will of their parents, while they have not understanding to govern themselves. But foolishness, in the language of Scripture, often means sinfulness; either the corrupt disposition of the heart, or wicked practices: and this expression seems to be used by Solomon, to denote the sinful bias of the human heart. We soon discern in children, evident marks of that corrupt nature which they derive from Adam: Pride, malice, deceit, revenge, and other wicked dispositions, appear in them almost as soon as they can speak. Many show themselves, at a very early period, impatient of restraint, unwilling to submit to the authority of their parents, and exceedingly desirous not only to be their own masters, but to have the ascendency over all around them. It is on these accounts that the rod of correction is necessary.

The end that Solomon proposes, is to drive this foolishness far from him, which does not imply that we have it in our power to root out the sinfulness and corruption that is naturally in the hearts of our children. It is the province of God alone to change the heart; and, unless he interpose in the riches of his mercy, it must remain alienated from him. "The carnal mind," says the Apostle, "is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." ‡ But we have it in our power to restrain children, and to prevent much evil that would otherwise take place. We can drive away their stubborness and self-will, and make them pliable and submissive. We can show them the evil of falsehood, punish them for it, and teach them to speak truth; and we can train them to habits of industry and sobriety, and make them decent and respectable members of society.

All this is surely to be expected from the exercise of proper authority; for the Word of God declares, that "the rod of correction shall drive foolishness far from the heart of the child;" —that if "thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die;"

* Prov. xix. 18. † Prov. xiii. 24. ‡ Rom. viii. 7.

and that you will thus "deliver his soul from hell," or save him from destruction and misery. And the happiness and comfort arising to a parent from a conscientious discharge of his duty in this particular, is expressed in very striking terms: "He shall give thee rest; yea, he shall give delight unto thy soul." On the other hand, the fatal consequence of neglecting this salutary discipline, is thus pointed out, "A child left to himself, bringeth his mother to shame."

When these things are duly considered, we shall see the justice and propriety of the rule that Solomon lays down for judging of the love and hatred of parents, "He that spareth his rod hateth his son; but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes." Is it any evidence that you love your son, when you give full scope to his natural folly and wickedness, and permit him to die, without using the means that God hath appointed to save his soul from hell? It must be a false love indeed, that produces such hurtful consequences in relation to its objects: and those who imagine that every kind of foolish indulgence is an evidence of parental affection, must be greatly deceived.

There is another thing contained in these exhortations of Solomon, which deserves your particular attention. He speaks of chastening *betimes*, and *while there is hope*. This implies that delays are dangerous, and that the time may come when your son will be past remedy, and no hope will remain of doing him any good by chastisement. We may consider this as a call to parents either to begin this discipline at an early period of life, or to check every vice in its first beginnings, and never to delay using the remedy till the disease becomes incurable. Every thing gains strength by habit; and a bad practice, from which a child might have been easily delivered, if proper methods had been taken with him at first, will, by frequent repetition, gain such ascendency over him, that all attempts to reclaim him will be to no purpose. This last explanation includes the former; for if it is necessary, in order to prevent the overpowering influence of any particular bad habit, to chasten your son betimes, it must be equally necessary to have your authority properly established at an early period, that you may prevent, as much as possible, all bad habits, and then you will be saved the more difficult task of attempting to cure them.

If parental authority answers any good purpose, it must be admitted that the sooner it is exercised it will be the more beneficial to children. In this way also it will be more easily established; and children who have been thus trained from their infancy, will find it quite natural, when they grow up, to yield submission and obedience.

Though it appears, from what has been said, that it is the indispensable duty of parents to use the rod of correction, and that the Lord hath appointed it for wise and beneficial purposes, yet it ought not to be too frequently used, otherwise it will defeat its own end. Injudicious correction is often worse than none at all; if it does not overcome the perverseness of your child, he gains a new ascendency over you every time that you correct him; and blows, by frequent repetition, will become so customary, that he will not much regard them, provided he can retain his own humour, and do as he pleases. This has a tendency to debase the mind, and to eradicate all sense of shame, which is one of the strongest natural principles that can be supposed to operate on the minds of children. There are many other methods of correcting their faults; and though Solomon repeatedly says the strongest things in favour of the rod of correction, he surely does not intend that parents should be always chastising their children. He mentions reproof as well as the rod, when he says, "The rod and reproof give wisdom." Let chastisement therefore be the last thing, and be sure that you accomplish in some measure the end you have in view, though this should occasion a very considerable degree of severity.

There is certainly an impropriety in using harsh methods on every trifling occasion, and the material faults of which children can be guilty, are but few, if they are under any proper management. The greatest of these is contempt of authority, or avowed opposition to it. This in a family, is like rebellion in a state, and must on no account be permitted. The reason is plain, because it is an inlet to every kind of wickedness; for whenever you lose your authority, they are no longer under any restraint, and may follow their natural inclinations with impunity. Lying is another crime that ought to be strictly attended to, and severely punished. If we add to these, some instances of malice, injustice, and profanity, few things else can be supposed to occur that will justify using violent measures with children. Other faults may be rectified by gentler means, which ought always, if possible, to be preferred.

But while I would guard you against every needless and unjustifiable use of the rod of correction, allow me on the other hand, to entreat you, with the greatest earnestness, to maintain an uniform and unceasing authority. Never yield it, not even in the most trifling matter, for it is not yours to yield. God hath committed to you this authority, for the purposes that have been mentioned; and if you allow your children to wrest it from you, and thereby ruin themselves, you do so at your peril. In this way parents ought to prevent the disagreeable

necessity of coming to extremities; and it is far easier to maintain always a proper degree of authority, than to regain it when lost. It may be exercised with gentleness and moderation, if it is constant and uniform; but when you allow your children to contradict you, let the occasion be what it may, you must either agree to lose your authority altogether, or use much greater severity. A look or a word in the one case, will have more influence than many blows in the other. A small degree of inattention also, will make you lose your authority; for children know well how far their superiors are determined to keep them in subjection, and take every opportunity of slackening the reins: no intermission therefore can be allowed in this particular. Consider well, before you give any absolute command, if the thing is right, and of such importance as to require your attention; for though you must not yield on any occasion, yet the best way to maintain constant authority, is seldom to interpose it, and when you do, to stand to it invariably, and in such a way as to show that you must be obeyed.

I do not speak here of unreasonable, and far less of sinful commands, from which parents ought certainly to recede; though it is proper on these occasions also, that they should make their children understand, that they yield not to them, but to a sense of duty. Nor do I wish to carry the matter so far as to deny that parents may be led frequently to do otherwise than they intended, through importunity and other causes; but whenever there is an express commandment given on your part, and a refusal on your child's, the question is at issue whether you shall be subject to him, or he to you; and the impropriety of hazarding a decision against yourselves, is too manifest to need any illustration.

We shall conclude this discourse with answers to a few objections.

Some of you, perhaps, may be ready to say, that your children are too young to be brought under authority, and that it will be time enough some years hence to use the rod of correction. But you will find yourselves in a very disagreeable and hopeless situation, as to any service you can do to your children, if you always maintain that they are too young, till they make you know that they are too old to be subject to your authority; and in the way that some people reckon, scarcely a single day intervenes between these two periods. We have already noticed some of the advantages arising from early discipline, and all that is further necessary, is to mention *how soon* it ought to take place. When you are sure that a child understands what you say to him, and when he gives evident marks

of resisting authority, by intentionally doing what you prohibit, there is not the smallest doubt that he is capable of subjection. Yet the folly of some parents is so great as to lead them to excuse the untowardness of their children, as if they were unable to understand what subjection means, at the very time that they are acting in opposition to their commands, and telling them in plain terms that they mean to do so. It is surely impossible, in the nature of things, that a child can thus gain an ascendency over his parents, and yet be incapable of yielding subjection; for this would imply that he has more sagacity than they, while the want of understanding is the excuse that is pleaded for him.

This is all that you have to consider with respect to the time of beginning the exercise of authority; for no severity can be necessary till there is some appearance of resistance, and this may be sooner or later, according to the various dispositions of children. But any child may arrive at a degree of obstinacy and perverseness, before he is two years of age, which it will be exceedingly difficult to overcome; and though his parents may not then discern it, they will afterwards complain that he is untractable and vicious, and that all their attempts to reclaim him are ineffectual, while they do not consider that this is the fruit of their own foolish indulgence, and mistaken tenderness.

Some of you may also object, that such strict discipline will have a tendency to make your children unhappy. It must be admitted that the due exercise of authority will frequently give them pain; but this is what the Lord intends, and had in view when he said, "Let not thy soul spare for his crying;" and to balance this, the advantages arising from chastisement are presented to your view, and frequently repeated. His commandment to use the rod, is therefore a merciful commandment; it occasions no uneasiness but what is salutary, no temporary crying but what may be expected to issue in the permanent good of your children.

It is however a mistake to imagine, that the strictest discipline which the Word of God enjoins, will upon the whole be productive of more pain and distress, than too much indulgence. A child who is accustomed to have all his inclinations gratified, will become peevish and fretful; his desires are unbounded, and the most affectionate mother will often find it utterly impossible to satisfy him. Children thus indulged must be unhappy; they get every thing they choose to cry for, and therefore they cry almost incessantly till they are four or five years of age. This is surely a melancholy circumstance, and the more so, because it arises from an ill-directed tenderness

and compassion, anxious for their welfare, but ignorant how to accomplish it. Make it an invariable rule, as soon as your children understand what you say, never to give them any thing because they cry for it. Whether it arises from a peevish or an imperious disposition, they ought equally to be resisted; and if you do so, they will soon refrain from all unnecessary crying. Even in times of sickness, when they must be treated with more than ordinary compassion, you increase their fretfulness by too many compliances. On these occasions it is much in their favour that they should be pliable and submissive; and whatever indulgence their situation may require, you, and not they, ought to be the judges. I cannot therefore see the propriety of making their sickness an excuse for the want of subjection in children.

As mothers are generally most to blame in this foolish and hurtful indulgence, and often persist in it notwithstanding the remonstrances of their husbands, I would entreat them to consider, if they are not under a greater obligation to please their husbands, than to satisfy the unreasonable clamours of their children.

I shall only take notice of one other objection, which is, that you may be in danger of making your children hate you, if you should strictly adhere to the severe discipline that has been recommended. Parents ought certainly to guard against every thing of this kind; and I apprehend that will be sufficiently done, by attending to what has been said on the prohibition in the text. But the Word of God declares, that true parental affection leads to the discipline which we have inculcated; and it is not so difficult as some may imagine to convince children of this, and to make them ingenuously acknowledge the evil of their conduct, and what it deserves. At any rate, when they come to years of discretion, they will be fully sensible that all our conduct was dictated by love, and will then be more grateful for our severity than our indulgence.

On the other hand, fondness does not produce any solid and permanent regard; indeed a child who has never been used to contradiction, can scarcely be expected to love any one but himself. He often tramples on his fond and doating mother, and shows how little he values all her tenderness. Indulgence must stop somewhere, and then immediately resentment begins on the part of the child: you have gone too far to convince him that love obliges you now to alter your tone, and thus you are sure to excite his ill-will and aversion.

But that which ought to satisfy the minds of Christians, and to silence all their objections, is the consideration of the authority of God in this matter. You cannot think yourselves at liberty to object against a Divine commandment, or to suppose that any bad consequences can arise from obeying it; for we are only miserable when we act in opposition to the law of God.

DISCOURSE II.

"And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath; but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."—Eph. vi. 4.

We have already explained the prohibition in the text, and the commandment to bring up our children in the nurture of the Lord. The next thing proposed was,

III. To explain and enforce the commandment, "to bring them up in the admonition of the Lord."

This is a very extensive commandment, and all of us who have children committed to our care, must be conscious of much imperfection, and many failings in our attention to this precept. Admonition signifies teaching or instructing them. It also implies exhortation, caution, and reproof; and supposes that Christians are much concerned about their children, not only to teach them, but to enforce their instructions by all the arguments and motives that can influence their minds.

The Apostle calls it *the admonition of the Lord*, or the admonition which he enjoins in his Word. This leads believing parents to consider it as enforced upon them by Divine authority, not only in this passage, but in other parts of the Scripture; for it necessarily follows from this epithet, that God had formerly commanded the same thing, and that the precepts relating to this subject, which he had given in former times, are now binding on Christian parents. The same observation also applies to what he calls the nurture or discipline of the Lord; and from this it appears, that believers of the Gospel are still subject to the precepts of the Old Testament, except in so far as they are expressly set aside by the New Testament revelation, or were merely typical of the good things which are now come.

The admonition of the Lord implies further, that all the instructions and exhortations of parents must be exactly conformable to the Word of God. The subject-matter of admonition is not left to your choice, nor are you to be guided in this by the maxims or customs of worldly men. The rule which the Lord hath given you for the regulation of your own temper and conduct, ought to guide you in all the admonitions that you give to your children, and you must teach them nothing that is, in any respect, opposite to the spirit of the Gospel.

A great variety of particulars are included in this admonition, but they may be all comprehended under these two;—Admonition as it relates to the conduct of children as members of society, or in regard to the things of this present world; and as it has a respect to the knowledge of the Gospel, and the concerns of religion. These two are clearly distinguishable; for though the things which fall to be mentioned under the first, are evidently the duty of believers of the Gospel, who, when they act suitably to their character and privileges, will be useful members of society, and consider every thing in which they are engaged as a part of their religion; yet it is one thing to be a Christian, and another thing to act a decent and becoming part in life. The former cannot be supposed without the latter, but the latter may without the former. In the sequel of these discourses, you will see sufficient reason for making this distinction, which I am anxious to preserve, though I do not intend to be over scrupulous in classing the various particulars.

I shall begin with what relates to the conduct of your children as members of society. There are some professing Christians, who would be thought too religious to pay any attention to matters of this kind. All that they want is to make their children religious, and this they will have them to be at any rate, vainly imagining that they have it in their power to teach them the true knowledge of the grace of God, and to make them Christians. And on the other hand, they do not properly take into their view, that every commendable part of a person's conduct, which relates even to the most ordinary concerns of this life, would be real religion, if he were animated by the principles and motives which lead the people of God to glorify his name in all their actions. It can admit of no doubt, that parents are obliged to give their children every sort of admonition, that has any tendency to promote either their temporal or spiritual happiness; and much instruction is necessary, respecting their good behaviour as members of society. I shall mention a few of what I conceive to be the leading things.

First, Teach them a kind, respectful, and courteous behaviour to all men. I will not here speak of superiors, inferiors, and equals, as is commonly done; for children have no inferiors. Any superiority which they may be supposed to derive from birth, station, or other external circumstances, is of little consequence in itself; they should not be taught to value themselves on account of such things; and the distinction between a man and a child, of which every one is conscious, undoubtedly calls for submission and respect on the part of the latter.

This kind of admonition will neither appear to you unnecessary in itself, nor too extensive in its application, when you consider that Christians are commanded to be *courteous*,* or discreet, affable, and obliging; that *gentleness* is enumerated among the fruits of the Spirit,† and this, as distinguished from love, peace, long-suffering, and goodness, must refer to the manner of our behaviour, or the outward expressions of a humble, kind, and beneficent heart; and also that we are commanded to "honour all men,"‡ and to be "gentle, showing all meekness unto all men."‖

This courteous, gentle, and respectful behaviour, which it is our duty to show to one another, and to all men, is the natural effusion of the heart, proceeding not merely from a desire to please, but from genuine love and humility; and in this respect it is distinguished from that politeness which prevails in the world. While therefore it is your duty to teach your children to be respectful and courteous in their behaviour and manner of speaking, you ought to pay more attention to the spirit than to the outward form of what we call good breeding. The form is also necessary, but it will be very unnatural, as well as hypocritical, if they are constrained to it; whereas, if you inculcate a kind, affable, and submissive disposition, this, with the example of others, will dispose them to behave with propriety, though you should never command them to make any obeisance. They must not be allowed to contradict any person, because this is totally inconsistent with that humility and self-diffidence which becomes them; and if they are not carefully checked in every thing of this kind, they will become impudent and ungovernable.

Second, Teach them to be neat and cleanly in their persons, and attend to order and regularity in the management of all their little concerns. You must not understand me as recommending finery of dress, or leading you to give any countenance to the natural pride and vanity of their minds, in relation

* 1 Pet. iii. 8. † Gal. v. 22. ‡ 1 Pet. ii. 17. ‖ Tit. iii. 2.

to external ornaments. What I have in view is a thing altogether different from this, which is consistent with the greatest sobriety and decency of character, while it is often totally wanting in those who are given to show and extravagance.

The Word of God prohibits Christian women from wearing immodest, splendid, or costly apparel; but it does not set aside every sort of ornament, for they are commanded to "*adorn* themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety:" * and those who follow the Scripture rule in these matters, are really most adorned; their appearance is not only inoffensive, but it is elegant and respectable, in proportion as they lay aside the foolish ornaments of vanity, and adopt those which are naturally dictated by modesty and sobriety. Every thing that is mean, despicable, and slovenly, is opposite to the spirit of the Gospel, as well as that which indicates pride, ambition, and vain glory. Teach your children, therefore, to pay a becoming attention to their external appearance. You will find this intimately connected with general decency of conduct; for children who are indifferent about every thing of this kind, are for the most part equally regardless of their character in other respects: they care not how disagreeable they make themselves, or how little they obtain the good opinion of those whom they ought to esteem, and thus may proceed to any kind of disorderly conduct, without shame or uneasiness.

Let them be trained to a regular way of proceeding in every thing that is committed to their charge, not so much for the sake of any inconvenience which their little improprieties may occasion either to themselves or others, as on account of the influence that such things will undoubtedly have on their dispositions and conduct, when they arrive at mature age. It is only in little things that you can deal with children; but remember that in this way you form the man; which makes the most particular attention to the smallest things absolutely necessary. The Scripture says, that "a good man will guide his affairs with discretion;" † and this is a very necessary part of his character, for he cannot otherwise have it in his power to indulge the goodness or benevolence of his heart. If you would wish to see your children afterwards conduct themselves in this way, lead them at an early period to observe order and discretion in managing such concerns as are in themselves of little or no consequence.

Third, It is a necessary part of this admonition to teach them a habit of thinking. There are many grown up people who do every thing at random, and seldom think deliberately

* 1 Tim. ii. 9. † Psal. cxii. 5.

on any thing they are to do or say. If they should happen at any time to do what is fit and becoming, it is rather by accident than design; and they are in perpetual confusion and embarrassment, the one-half of their time being spent in endeavouring to rectify the blunders they have committed for want of thought. If you would not wish your children to behave in this manner, attend to the proper means for correcting it, before it is too late. They are naturally thoughtless, and do every thing without consideration; and this disposition in them, admits only of being cured by slow degrees. Oblige them often to think, and to weigh the consequences of what they may do or say; what inconveniences may occur from it to themselves; how they may distress their parents and other relations; and what opinion they may expect wise people to form of their conduct. Make them, as they are able to bear it, to understand the causes and connexion of things, and to know that the chief distinction between a wise man and a fool lies in this—the one thinks, and the other will not give himself the trouble to use that portion of understanding which God hath given him. Solomon hints at this when he says, "A fool uttereth all his mind, but a wise man keepeth it in till afterwards;"* and so essential to wisdom is this due consideration about our words and actions, which admits not either of speaking hastily, or speaking too much, that he supposes silence will procure, even to a fool, the reputation of wisdom,† while he represents unthinking loquaciousness as a sure indication of folly.‡

All of you must have observed, that a steady attention of mind, and a cautious thoughful manner of conducting one's affairs, is more useful in the ordinary concerns of life, than the brightest talents. Application and perseverance will surmount the greatest obstacles, and supply the want of many other qualities. All your instructions, therefore, about the things of this life, are principally useful to your children, in proportion as they have a tendency to make them think for themselves. They will learn more by their own observation and experience, when once they are led into a proper train, than they can possibly learn by all the theories you can instil into their minds. Much knowledge may often be possessed, without understanding how to make use of it; and in this case, it is rather hurtful than beneficial.

Fourth, Teach your children sobriety, industry, and frugality. This is necessary for your own interest, but much more

* Prov. xxix. 11. † Prov. xvii. 28 ‡ Eccl. v. 3.

so for their comfort and happiness. If they are not taught to be moderate in their views, they will not be content in any situation: if you indulge them improperly, it is not any given number of compliances that will satisfy them. These will only tend to enlarge their desires, and your utmost endeavours to please them will be of no avail. I need not tell you how much the duty of sobriety, in relation to all the enjoyments of this life, is enforced upon Christians in the Word of God, and how suitable it is to the spirit of the Gospel; for you are not ignorant of these things. But I may be allowed to remind you, that it is a necessary consequence of a due regard to sobriety in your own conduct, to check the ambition and criminal self-indulgence of your children.

Industry is nearly allied to sobriety, for "he that is slothful in his work, is brother to him that is a great waster." * Encourage your children to be always active and employed, and if you see any appearances of a sauntering, vacant, and listless disposition, use all proper means to deliver them from it, as it will expose them to many temptations. It is of great advantage to young persons to be inured to labour and exertion, and never to wish any relaxation from it, but what is necessary for rest and refreshment. A disposition to active employment is inherent in most children, and though in their younger years it is chiefly occupied in childish amusements, this contributes to their health and improvement in various respects; and if this active disposition were directed to useful purposes in an easy and agreeable way, as they grow up, they might in general be prevented from giving themselves up to idleness, and thus led to engage in necessary business, without any sort of reluctance. In the Book of Proverbs, many things are said in commendation of diligence in the exercise of lawful callings, while sloth and idleness are also condemned in the most severe and pointed terms; and in the New Testament, Christians are commanded to "labour, working with their hands:† and to be not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord."‡

In this industry, as it respects children, we must include attention to necessary branches of learning, to which I do not think they should be led in general by threatenings and punishments, but by making them conceive it to be a privilege, and thus animating them to engage in all their studies with a ready and cheerful mind. Chastisement for the neglect of this may

* Prov. xviii. 9. † Eph. iv. 28. ‡ Rom. xii. 11.

be proper on some rare occasions, but nothing will succeed that is uniformly carried on by force and constraint.

Frugality is likewise intimately connected with temperance and sobriety, and is evidently the duty of Christians: not indeed that frugality which arises from a mean, sordid, and covetous disposition, but that which flows from the love of justice and mercy, and from a due consideration of their being "stewards of the manifold grace of God." * We have the example of the Lord of the universe, commanding his disciples, after he had fed five thousand by a miracle, to gather up the fragments that remained, *that nothing might be lost.* † This surely will be a sufficient argument with you, not to allow your children to waste or destroy any of the bounties which the Lord in his providence hath conferred upon you, and to make every thing that is useful the object of their care, however small it may be in value. If this be attended to, the rest will follow of course.

Fifth, We shall mention here, also, the necessity of teaching them truth, justice, and benevolence. You must all be convinced of the great importance of these duties, and that we can have no pretensions to Christianity, unless we exemplify them in our own conduct. It might be expected that the consequence of this would naturally be a strict attention to the conduct of our children in these particulars; yet observation teaches us, that this does not always follow. The faults of children appear so trifling, and parents are disposed to make so many allowances for them, that they are apt on some occasions to palliate or disregard the worst of crimes. Remember, however, that falsehood is a crime, whether the thing to which it relates is trifling or important; that injustice in the smallest matters is an evil which will lead to more flagrant instances of the same kind, as opportunities occur; and that a child who will not show mercy to his companion, or part with the smallest thing that he conceives to be his own, will in all probability show the same narrow selfish disposition when he arrives at manhood. If we would impress upon the minds of children a proper sense of moral good and evil, we must apply the principles which regulate our own conduct to the things with which they are conversant, and lead them to a corresponding practice in all those little matters which engross their attention, and agitate their passions.

Sixth, Pay the strictest attention to the company with whom they ought to associate. I can scarcely find words to express the sense that I entertain of the importance of this direction; for unless you attend to it, all your other attempts

* 1 Pet. iv. 10. † John vi. 12.

to instruct and admonish your children will be of no avail whatever. The Apostle informs believers of the Gospel, that "evil communications corrupt good manners;" * and if *they* are in danger from this quarter, what shall we say of children? If you allow them to have intercourse and familiarity with wicked persons, or if you are negligent in detecting this, and do not watch over them with the utmost anxiety, when they are in any danger of falling into this snare, they may be utterly ruined before you take the alarm. Observe with what earnest solicitude Solomon cautions us against the influence of bad company: "Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away. For they sleep not, except they have done mischief," † &c. He uses a variety of expressions to show the imminent danger arising from such a connexion, and the necessity of watching against it. And though the principal thing intended in these words, should be to dissuade us from having any connexion with wicked men *in committing iniquity*, yet it it will not be easy to show how this can be avoided while we make them our companions.

In vain, therefore, do you expect that your children will profit by the best admonitions, if you suffer them to be exposed to the influence of bad examples. They imitate almost every thing that is said or done in their presence; and through the natural corruption of their hearts, the worst examples often make the deepest impression upon their minds.

These remarks will make it evident also, that it is the duty of Christians to pay attention to the conduct of their servants, and to avoid as much as possible having any person under their roof, from whose example their children might be in danger.

But as they cannot be altogether withheld from seeing the wickedness and profanity that take place in the world, you must admonish them with the greatest earnestness to follow no example but what is good. Labour to convince them, that the misconduct of others will be no excuse to them, and that they must not even in all respects be guided by the example and advice of those whom you esteem.

This leads to an observation on your behaviour to children who are not your own. There are many who foolishly imagine that they cannot be too kind and indulgent to the children of their friends, and that the more they fawn upon them, and load them with favours, the more they show their regard, both to them and their parents. This is a great mistake. Is it any favour to overload the stomachs of children, and injure their

* 1 Cor. xv. 33. † Prov. iv. 14—16.

health, as is often done in such cases? Is it doing them any good, to make them consider their parents as less indulgent than you? Has not this an evident tendency to make them discontented at home? And if you thus indulge them in the presence, and in opposition to the remonstrances, of their parents, is not this teaching them to make light of their authority? Children need to be cautioned against the influence of these mistaken friends.

Seventh, You must not only admonish your children, but take care that they reduce your admonitions to practice. Without this, little good can be expected to flow from the best instructions. Children cannot understand nor remember a variety of rules and precepts, but if you lead them to the constant practice of the duties which you wish to recommend, they will understand them perfectly; and habit will have such an influence, that things which appear difficult at first, will become quite easy and natural. We see the power of habit in the conduct of all men. It may be said to govern the whole world, and has more influence on the conduct of mankind in general, than almost any principle we can name: we feel in many cases that its sway is irresistible, and children most of all are affected by it. The inclinations and propensities of those who are grown up in life, are generally such as custom has induced in their younger years. This attention to the conduct of your children, is evidently implied in bringing them up in the admonition of the Lord; for whatever you do to instruct and reprove them, this is of no service any further than as it affects their conduct; and if they are permitted to go astray, you bring them up, not in the admonition of the Lord, but in the ways of sin.

Instead of enlarging further on that kind of admonition which relates to the good behaviour of your children as members of society, I refer you to the Book of Proverbs, which abounds with the most pointed and minute directions to persons in every situation, how to regulate their conduct in all the concerns of this life;—train them up assiduously in the practices there recommended. I shall now conclude this part of the subject, with an observation on the most likely method of rendering these admonitions effectual.

They ought to be enforced by such motives as are suited to affect the minds of children. It is your duty, as we shall presently see, to instruct them in the knowledge of the Gospel, the laws of Christ, and the motives which lead to the obedience of these laws; but so long as they are not converted to the faith by the power of God, we cannot expect their conduct to be regulated by the motives of the Gospel. It is necessary to set before them, in the most striking and forcible manner, how

much their own happiness and comfort in this world, in various respects, is connected with their good behaviour; and particularly, to deter them from wicked practices by the shame and disgrace which attend them, and to encourage them in their duty by representing it as honourable and praiseworthy. If the prevalence of corruption has not already placed them beyond the reach of every rational principle, you will find that nothing will have so powerful an influence as the fear of shame, and the hope of applause; and parents should make them feel the difference between a state of favour and approbation when they do well, and the discredit which they bring upon themselves when their conduct is blameable. In order to keep them properly alive to the feelings of shame, never affront them unnecessarily. Reprove them as seldom as possible before strangers, and do not even expose all their failings to your own families, especially such offences as have been only once committed. Chastisement will in a great measure lose its effect, if children do not feel the shame that ought to result from it; and rewards for good behaviour will often do harm, if they are not given and received as tokens of your *general* approbation of their conduct.

These natural principles are not evil in themselves; they are regulated, but not set aside by the Gospel; for though Christians act from much higher motives, and must obey Christ in many things which will expose them to the contempt and hatred of the world; yet a regard to their character and reputation *on just grounds*, is not prohibited in the Word of God. Solomon affirms, that "a good name is better than precious ointment." * Christians are obliged to have some respect to the opinion and approbation of men, by such general exhortations as these: "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, (or venerable,) whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." † It is also one of the qualifications of a Christian teacher, that he should have "a good report of them that are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil." ‡ All pride, and vain glory, and every desire of pleasing men that prevents us from seeking the approbation of God, is undoubtedly opposite to the duty of Christians; but professors of religion, who are entirely regardless of the opinion of the world, in relation to those practical things of which all men are judges, must be destitute of the true fear of God.

We are now to speak of the admonition of the Lord, as it

* Eccl. vii. 1. † Phil. iv. 8. ‡ 1 Tim. iii. 7.

relates to the knowledge of the Gospel and the concerns of religion.

This is infinitely more important than any admonitions which have for their object the transitory affairs of this present mortal state, and above all other things deserves to be called the admonition of the Lord. Yet there are, among professing Christians, too many who are negligent in the performance of this duty, and some who endeavour to establish a religious principle against it, and consider every thing of this kind as having a tendency to make children self-righteous and hypocritical; as if we could not instruct them in the knowledge of *free remission of sins* through the blood of Christ, without leading them to depend on their own works; nor speak at all about the *true profession* of his name, without causing them to make this profession in hypocrisy.

But, say they, Divine grace is sovereign, the knowledge of it is altogether supernatural, and can only be communicated by the power of God, and the teaching of his Holy Spirit; therefore all our attempts are equally vain and sinful, for we have nothing in our power, and every exertion of this kind must proceed upon a denial of Divine sovereignty. But is it necessary to our holding the doctrine of Divine sovereignty, that we should hide from our children the riches and freeness of the mercy of God to sinners, and use no means to teach them the knowledge of Christ and his salvation? Then might we say, that the preaching of the Apostles was an open denial of what they taught, for they certainly declared to all men the glad tidings of salvation,* besought them to be reconciled to God,† and commanded them to believe the Gospel,‡ and to repent and be converted, that their sins might be blotted out. ‖ They had, it is true, an immediate commission from the Lord Jesus Christ, thus to preach the Gospel, and call men to repentance; but this does not change the nature of the thing. If the use of all such means to enlighten sinners in the knowledge of the truth, is opposite to the sovereignty of Divine grace, the Apostles, above all others, would have avoided this, and consequently they would not have published their testimony, nor pressed it on the minds of unbelievers, as they frequently did; but must have left all in the hand of God, without any endeavours on their part to convince men either of their sinful state, or the way of obtaining deliverance from it. Such are the absurdities in which people involve themselves by this false and destructive principle.

* Rom. x. 10—13, 18. Mark xvi. 15. † 2 Cor. v. 20.
‡ Acts xvi. 31. ‖ Acts iii. 19.

Christians are undoubtedly bound to teach their children both the doctrines and duties of Christianity. Were not the people of Israel commanded to instruct their children in the knowledge of what God had done for their fathers, and the laws and ordinances which he gave them to observe? Moses enjoins this upon them in the most solemn way, when he says, "Take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life; *but teach them thy sons and thy sons' sons:* Specially the day that thou stoodest before the Lord thy God in Horeb, when the Lord said unto me, Gather the people together, and I will make them hear my words, that they may learn to fear me all the days that they shall live upon the earth, *and that they may teach their children.*" * Again he says, "Therefore shall ye lay up these my words in your heart, and in your soul, and bind them for a sign upon your hand, that they may be as frontlets between your eyes. *And ye shall teach them your children*, speaking of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." † The Psalmist also declares that this was the practice among those who feared God in Israel, and shows by what authority they were led to do so, in these words, "I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings of old: which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from their children, showing to the generation to come the praises of the Lord, and his strength, and his wonderful works that he hath done. For he established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children; that the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born, who should arise and declare them to their children; that they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments; and might not be as their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation, a generation that set not their heart aright, and whose spirit was not steadfast with God." ‡ Hezekiah too, when under lively impressions of gratitude to God for his recovery from a dangerous disease, makes use of these emphatical words, "The living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I do this day; the father to the children shall make known thy truth." ‖ And the Lord expresses his approbation of this in the case of Abraham; "I know him, that he will command his

* Deut. iv. 9, 10. † Deut. xi. 18, 19. ‡ Psal. lxxviii. 2—9.
‖ Isa. xxxviii. 19.

children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him." *

To these commandments and examples the Apostle seems to refer, when he calls the admonition of which we now speak, *the admonition of the Lord;* and will any of us say that we are less bound to teach our children than the sons of Jacob were, whom God redeemed out of the house of bondage? Are the things which he hath done for us of less importance, or the motives which he hath given us to obey him, less powerful and constraining? Think of the great salvation which God hath wrought for us, and which we profess to enjoy, the means by which it has been accomplished, and the glorious hope to which we are raised; and then say if we ought not to conceive our obligations to be as much stronger than those laid upon the ancient people of God, as the salvation conferred upon us is greater.

We can only give a short sketch of the things which you are called to teach them. Begin with the creation of the world and of man, and, without attempting any abstract definition of the perfections of God, which you cannot understand any more than they, give them some idea of his wisdom, power, and goodness, as these appear in the works of creation. † Endeavour to impress upon their minds a sense of their dependence on the great Jehovah, as their creator and preserver, and the obligations under which they are laid, by his constant loving-kindness and mercy, in providing for all their wants.‡ Inform them of the fall of man, and the miseries which it entails; that the world is cursed on account of the sin of man; that diseases and death are the consequences of the first transgression; and that all the posterity of Adam inherit from him a corrupt nature.‖ Give them some account of the conduct of God to his ancient people, and the various things that befel them in Egypt, in the wilderness, and in the promised land. To these they may first attend merely as historical facts, and you can afterwards instruct them as to the design of God in the whole of his procedure towards that people: that the Messiah was to spring from them, and that they, and their temple, altar, sacrifices, priests, prophets, kings, &c., were all typical of good things to come. Make them acquainted with the promises concerning the seed of the woman who was to bruise the head of the serpent; § the seed of Abraham, in whom all nations were

* Gen. xviii. 19.
† Psal. xix. 1—6. Isa. xl. 12, to the end. Rom. i. 19, 20.
‡ Psal. lxv. 5—13. Psal. cvii. Acts xiv. 17.
‖ Gen. iii. 6, 17—19. Rom. v. 12—21. Psal. li. 5. Eph. ii. 1—3.
§ Gen. iii. 15.

to be blessed;* the seed of David, who was to be David's Lord as well as his son,† and to sit upon the throne of his kingdom for ever.‡ Call their attention to the minute description which is given by the prophets of the character of the Messiah, his Divine majesty and glory, his mean appearance, the work that he was to accomplish, and the particular circumstances which they foretel concerning his incarnation, life, death, resurrection, and following glory.

Lead them to consider the exact fulfilment of these promises, in the coming of the Messiah, in all that he did himself, and in all that was done to him by his greatest enemies;‖ that after suffering the contempt and persecution of men, during a life of the deepest sorrow and affliction, which was spent in doing good, fulfilling all righteousness, preaching the gospel, and confirming his doctrine by miraculous works, he died upon the cross § as an atoning sacrifice for the sins of men; that he rose again from the dead on the third day, giving the most complete evidence of the truth of his own testimony, and that of the prophets, concerning the infinite dignity of his person, and the perfection of his atonement, which pleases God;¶ that he is now ascended to the throne of his glory; and repentance and remission of sins are preached in his name unto all nations, while the fullest assurance is given, that he that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned.** Point out to them the great and inestimable blessings which we obtain through the death of Christ; the forgiveness of sins, peace with God, the spirit of adoption, deliverance from the power of sin, and the hope of the resurrection of the dead, and of eternal glory.†† Inform them also of the second coming of Jesus Christ, and the important transactions which will then take place; that he will come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, and will then sit upon the throne of his glory; that all nations shall be gathered before him, and that he will judge them according to their works; for the wicked shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal.‡‡

These things ought to be set before them, not merely in a doctrinal way, but as matters in which they are most deeply interested. When they are capable of committing actual sin,

* Gen. xxviii. 14. † Psal. cx. 1. ‡ 2 Sam. vii. 13, 16.
‖ Luke xxiv. 25—27, 44—46. Acts xiii. 27, 29.
§ Acts ii. 22, 23, and x. 38, 39. Heb. ix. 26, 28.
¶ Luke xxiv. 26, 46. Acts ii. 24—36. Rom. i. 4. 1 Pet. i. 21.
** Luke xxiv. 47. Acts xiii. 38, 39, 46—48.
†† Rom. iii. 24; and v. 1—5; and vi. 14; and Ch. viii. throughout.
‡‡ Mat. xxv. 31, 32, 46.

tell them plainly of their miserable situation as transgressors of the Divine law, and under its curse; representing to them their absolute need of salvation through the blood of Christ, and the impossibility of obtaining deliverance from the wrath to come in any other way. Urge this upon their consciences, by showing them the extent of the law of God, and their many deficiencies in that perfect love to God and their neighbour which the law requires. Speak to them of the riches of Divine mercy displayed in Christ, and the suitableness and all-sufficiency of his finished work to heal their souls, and to give them peace with God; informing them that the Gospel is preached to every creature without exception; that it suits the case of the most guilty and despairing, of which you can produce many instances from the New Testament; and that no works or exertions are necessary on their part, to put them in possession of the benefits of the death of Christ; for the work which justifies the ungodly is already finished, and sinners obtain an interest in it *through faith*, in opposition to being justified by the deeds of the law.*

Lead them also to consider the practical influence of the truth on those who believe it; that the Word of God, when it is received, must necessarily comfort, and sanctify, and bring forth fruit, and that every profession of faith in Christ, apart from this, is vain and hypocritical; for he has declared, "By their fruits ye shall know them. Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven." †

This instruction will be best communicated, by showing them what effects the Gospel produced on those who first believed it. They were "turned from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God." ‡ The Word of truth, accompanied by the divine energy of the Holy Spirit, reached their souls, overcame all their enmity, and made them subject to the Prince of Peace. Those who were converted by the preaching of the Apostles, were immediately baptised, as a public testimony of their faith in GOD, THE FATHER, THE SON, and THE HOLY SPIRIT, into whose name they were baptised; ‖ and particularly of their faith in Christ, their enjoyment of the blessings purchased by his death, and their subjection to his laws. § "They continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." ¶

* Rom. iii. 20—31, and iv. 4, 5, 16, and x. 5—14.
† Matt. vii. 20, 21. ‡ Acts xxvi. 18. ‖ Matt. xxviii. 19.
§ Acts ii. 38, 41, and xxii. 16. Rom. vi. 3, 4. ¶ Acts ii. 42.

They abounded in works of liberality,* and thus showed their mortification to this world, and their love to one another for the truth's sake, by which they were closely united together; for we are informed that "the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul." † They were taught also by the grace of God, which bringeth salvation, to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; ‡ and thus they recommended their holy profession to all around them, by a conversation becoming the Gospel, while they strictly adhered to all the commandments of our Lord and Saviour. They were constrained by the love of Christ to live not unto themselves, but unto him who died for them, and rose again. ‖ They looked also for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; § and while their souls were animated and encouraged by this lively hope, they were moved with the fear of being disapproved in the day of the Lord, if they should depart from the truth, or act in opposition to its genuine influence; for the Apostle says, when speaking about their confident hope of eternal life, and willingness to be absent from the body, and present with the Lord, "Wherefore we labour, that, whether present (in the body) or absent (from it,) we may be accepted of him. For we must all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." ¶

As to the particular mode of teaching your children, it appears to me not very material, whether this is done by asking them from time to time such questions as occur to your memory, and furnishing them with Scriptural answers; or by using a catechism, provided this catechism be exactly conformable to the Word of God. Each of these methods has advantages peculiar to itself. When parents are judicious, well informed, and able to convey proper instructions to their children, there is no need for any set form, and children will make greater progress in the knowledge of Divine things, and be less in danger of falling into error, when they are led immediately to the Word of God, and derive all their instruction from this pure and uncorrupted source. But every Christian parent is not equal to this task, and some children are slow to receive instruction, and need to have the same things so often repeated, that the parent's method naturally turns into a set form at last. In

* Acts. ii. 44, 45. † Acts iv. 32. ‡ Tit. ii. 11, 12.
‖ 2 Cor. v. 14, 15. § Tit. ii. 13. ¶ 2 Cor. v. 9, 10.

these cases it might be preferable to make use of a simple, well-digested catechism, expressed as much as possible in the language of Scripture, if such a thing could be obtained without any mixture of false doctrine. But whatever method you follow, I beseech you do not forget, that the success of your endeavours depends entirely on the blessing of him who gave the increase, when Paul preached and Apollos watered. Depend therefore upon God, and pray earnestly to him, that he would accompany his Word with the power of his Holy Spirit, and make it reach the hearts of your children.

It is absolutely necessary that there should be some striking appearances of this, before we give our children any encouragement to profess the faith. But, though it is evidently inconsistent with our duty to lead them by our authority, or their attachment to us, to observe the ordinances of Jesus Christ, for this would really be to make them hypocrites; yet there are many things so much in our power, that we must be highly culpable if we do not attend to them. For instance, if we have any concern for their souls, this will induce us to bring them regularly to the church on the first day of the week; for we know that "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God;" * and we will be careful that they do not go to places of worship, where they will hear doctrine subversive of the Gospel, and ruinous to the souls of men. They can have no pretence of any principle of conscience against this, till they are capable to choose for themselves, and can give some reason for their choice. We ought also to enjoin upon them a suitable conduct on the Sabbath-day, not allowing them to run loose, or to indulge in play as on other days, that we ourselves may not be interrupted in the duties to which we are called, and that they may attend to the instructions which they ought to receive, both in public and in private. It is likewise our duty to restrain all insobriety in the article of dress, and to prohibit them from reading such books, or frequenting such public amusements, as might have a tendency to corrupt and vitiate their minds. If we indulge them in matters of this kind, it is little better than following the same practices ourselves. Much more will this hold in relation to immoral conduct; those who suffer their children to commit such crimes, must have too little aversion to them, and are actually partakers in them. Yet we have no dominion over the consciences of our children, nor any right either to command or persuade them to make a profession of the name of Christ, till they appear to be taught of God.

* Rom. x. 17.

Only one thing more occurs to me with respect to the religious training of children, namely, what instructions ought to be given them about the duty of prayer. If we teach them that all the blessings they enjoy come from the bountiful hand of God, we ought also to represent it as their duty and privilege to pray to him for every thing they need, and to express their gratitude for the mercies which he daily bestows. And if we speak to them of salvation through the name of Christ, we cannot fail to urge upon them the duty of prayer, seeing this is a part of the gospel testimony, that "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved;" * and one who was in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity, was thus addressed by the Apostle Peter, "Repent, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee." † But it is also necessary to set before them the way of access to God through the atonement of Christ, and to call them to repentance while we exhort them to pray, showing them that those only can be heard and accepted who approach unto God in the name of the advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, who is the propitiation for our sins. ‡

If it is necessary thus to pray with understanding, from a sense of our need of mercy, and some degree of persuasion that God is the hearer of prayer as he is manifested in the Gospel, the just God and the Saviour; it must be improper to make children repeat words which they do not understand, and to call this praying to God, while they are totally unconscious of their own wants, and have no faith in the Lord's ability to supply them, nor in the ground on which they can expect an answer to their prayers. Nay, in many cases they know not that they are addressing God at all, for their prayers are repeated in the presence of their parents, or of those who have the charge of them; and it is natural for them to imagine, that they address themselves to the persons at whose command they perform this task.

I would therefore have you to avoid this unmeaning form while you encourage your children to pray, and recommend to them this privilege, by every motive that leads you to pour out your own hearts before the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Teach them on all these occasions, "to enter into their closet, and when they have shut the door, to pray to our Father who is in secret;" ‖ for this, more than almost any other instruction, will tend to give them a just idea of the nature of prayer. It is likewise better that they should express the real desires of their hearts, in however imperfect a manner,

* Rom. x. 13. † Acts viii. 22, 23. ‡ 1 John ii. 1, 2. ‖ Matt. vi. 6.

than to use the most unexceptionable form of words, which probably, though it were understood, might have no relation whatever to the state of their minds.

The Lord's prayer seems intended rather to teach his disciples what things they should pray for, and to prevent them from using vain repetitions as the heathen do, than to furnish them with a precise form of words. For there are many other examples of prayer in the New Testament; and, though the whole of these correspond exactly with the matter contained in the Lord's prayer, and are imitations of its concise and comprehensive manner, yet none of them are expressed in the words which are used by our Lord. While, therefore, it is certainly proper to call the attention of children to this excellent directory for prayer, they ought to be cautioned against a formal and unmeaning repetition of it.

Another particular on this head requires still to be considered, which is, that you should enforce all your admonitions by your own example. We have already made some remarks on the influence of example, when exhorting you to preserve your children from falling into bad company; but your own example is of much greater importance than that of any one else. It is always before them, they observe you daily, they have confidence in you, and believe that what you do is right; and, even on the supposition that they act as good a part as can in general be expected from children, their utmost ambition will be to follow your example: many come short of their parents, but few excel them. You ought therefore to be exceedingly cautious to avoid every thing in your own conduct that may tend to mislead your children; their good behaviour at present depends upon it, and in all probability your example will have a considerable influence in forming their character for life. You have no right to expect that your precepts will have a salutary influence, if you act in opposition to them yourselves: nor can you with any consistency blame your children for the very same things that you practise.

We cannot mention all the particulars in which you ought to show them a pattern of sobriety, righteousness, and godliness, for this would lead us to speak of every Christian virtue: nor is it necessary; for you know what is incumbent on you as the followers of Jesus Christ. But in general observe, that these remarks apply to every thing that is good and praiseworthy. Whatever you would have your children to do, make it your constant aim to do it yourselves, and never let them have it to say, that you live in the practice of any one thing which you wish them to avoid. We shall exemplify this by a particular instance. There are many people who speak falsely to chil-

dren, sometimes merely for their entertainment, and at other times to soothe them, and quiet their clamours; putting them in fear by things which have no existence, promising what they have no intention to perform, or telling them a downright lie to deceive them. Such things are excused because they are trifling, or done only with a view to amuse or frighten children. But however unimportant the subject may be, and whatever good ends you may propose in telling what you know to be false, you are guilty of lying when you do so; and in this, you set an example to your children of one of the greatest crimes which they have it in their power to commit. You ought not only to avoid giving them a bad example, but to beware of every appearance of it. Never allow them to proceed on a mistake, and to suppose that you say or do what is wrong, for want of a proper explanation. This will happen when you tell them marvellous stories, which even children can scarcely credit, without saying at same time that you do not vouch for the truth of them; or when you speak of extraordinary and incredible things, which in one sense are false, and in another true. When you allow them to remain in the belief that you have told a falsehood, whether it be so or not, you teach them to lie.

We shall now take some notice of the example which you ought to set before them in matters of religion, principally with a view to show you how absurd it is to suppose that you can be of any use to your children in this respect, unless your practice justifies your profession, and accords with the instructions which you communicate. You may talk to them of the love and fear of God: but alas! will they not either think that these are light matters in themselves, or that you make light of them, if you do not give evidence that you yourselves are fearers of God, by submitting in all things to his authority, and taking his Word for your rule? What estimation will they form of your speeches about the Gospel being the one thing needful, and the profession which you make of mortification to this world, if they can discern from your conduct that you are chiefly solicitous about present happiness? Will they think you sincere in what you say about confidence in God, if they see you often distracted with worldly care? And though you may talk to them of the duties of devotion, and the way of access to God in prayer; how are they to understand this, or how can they think there is any sincerity in you, if they never witness your prayers? This is one thing among others, which shows the necessity of Christians attending to family devotion. If it is your duty not only to admonish your children, but to exemplify in your own conduct all that you would wish to

enforce upon them, is it not of great consequence that you should set them an example of daily prayer, to show that you are believers in Christ, and approach to God with humble confidence in his name; that you live by the atonement, and thus delight in having intercourse with God; that you are grateful to him for the mercies which he daily bestows on you and your families; and that you trust in him for every needful blessing?

A train of conduct opposite to this is worse, in some respects, than saying nothing to your children about religion at all. It is teaching them to think the Gospel a matter of mere theory, and that they may with safety speculate about things of infinite importance, without having their hearts and conduct affected by them. It is teaching them to be hypocrites, and false professors of the name of Christ. It is necessary to guard you against the slightest appearances of this inconsistent conduct, by showing you how odious it is in its extreme, and what destructive consequences may be expected from it. Thus it appears, that a good example is included in the admonition which Christian parents are commanded to give to their children.

Those who have the children of their friends or others committed to their charge, are also called to the performance of the same duties; and they should endeavour to supply, by a principle of conscience, the deficiency that must arise from the want of parental affection.

We may notice, in conclusion, that all the duties which parents owe to their children, must proceed from love; indeed this is the principle of every duty to our fellow-creatures, for love is the fulfilling of the law; but it is especially necessary here. When we consider what a laborious task it is to bring up children, how much toil of body and anxiety of mind it occasions, what constant watchfulness is necessary for their preservation from external injuries, and what diligence is requisite to teach them every thing that has a relation to their happiness in this life, and in that which is to come, while our admonitions must be repeated daily, and our utmost exertions employed to make them effectual; we must see at once, that all this cannot be done without a high degree of attachment to them. How could we bear their follies and impertinences, or show any kind of moderation in reproving them, if we did not love them? We may therefore discern much wisdom and goodness in the conduct of our great Creator, who has implanted in the hearts of parents a strong affection for their offspring, which effectually disposes them to seek their happiness, and will in many respects accomplish this end, if they be properly informed about the means of

obtaining it. This passion is universal, with only a few exceptions; it is one of the essential properties of our nature, though not peculiar to it, since we observe in the inferior creation also a strong affection to their young. It is common to all parents, however deficient in point of understanding, and destitute of the influence of religion and the fear of God.

The Gospel does not eradicate these natural affections, though it obliges us to love Christ more than father, or mother, or wife, or children, or even our own lives:* on the contrary, it enforces them, and leads to the due exercise of that love and tenderness which nature dictates. The Word of God represents the want of natural affection as a great evil, and ranks it with the worst of crimes;† husbands are commanded to love their wives as Christ loved the church, and as they love their own bodies;‡ and wives are commanded to love their husbands and their children.‖

I cannot therefore suppose you deficient in this love; you have all the ties of nature as well as other men, and you profess to be subject to the authority of God, enjoining, as matters of conscience, the duties which result from them. This encourages me to address you on the subject of bringing up your children; and, aside from this motive, I should have little hope of being able to prevail with you to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. But, if you have the hearts of parents, and wish above all things to make your children happy, ought you not to consider well in what way this desirable object is to be attained? And is not this a strong argument to induce you to attend to what has been said on this important subject? The more you think of the directions that have been offered to your consideration from the Word of God, the more will they be approved by your reason and conscience, and call forth all your parental tenderness to give them force and energy.

* Matt. x. 37, 39. Luke xiv. 26.
† Rom. i. 31. 2 Tim. iii. 3.
‡ Eph. v. 25, 28.
‖ Tit. ii. 4.

DISCOURSE III.

"And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath; but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."—Eph. vi. 4.

In the last discourse, we explained the commandment, to "bring up our children in the admonition of the Lord," as it relates to the concerns of this life, and of the life that is to come.

IV. We shall now mention a few motives and encouragements, in addition to what have been already stated, suited to animate you to the faithful performance of these duties.

First, The example of the Lord himself, in his conduct towards his children. He condescends to call himself the father of his people; he hath said that they shall be sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty; and having taken them into this near and intimate relation, he acts the part of a most kind, indulgent, and compassionate father. This surely is an example worthy of our imitation. Consider, then, how he exercises his paternal love. The greatest display of it is, in this case, beyond all possibility of our imitation—I mean the gift of his beloved Son when we were enemies and ungodly, and his reconciling us to himself by the death of his Son. But it is from this, that we are taught to perceive the greatness of his love, and to expect every other blessing which God can bestow. "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" * We cannot imitate this expression of Divine love in our conduct towards our children, for they are not our enemies; they never needed to be reconciled to us, (unless some of you have had a prodigal son,) and we have not adopted them into our families.

But the Lord's method of training his children, after they are redeemed by the blood of Christ, and brought into his family, claims our attention in this view. While he bestows

* Rom. viii. 32.

every blessing according to his own good pleasure, in his free and sovereign mercy, he refuses nothing that contributes to the real happiness of his people: "He will give grace and glory; no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." * And our Lord, when representing the compassion of God the Father, and illustrating it by the kindness of earthly parents, says to his disciples, "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children; how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit," or, as it is elsewhere expressed, "good things, to them that ask him?" † He pities them in all their weakness and distress, and affords them seasonable relief and protection. "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust:" ‡ And "though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies." ‖ He exercises no severity without a proper cause; for "He doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men." § All his dispensations are meant for the good of his children, and in mercy to their souls; "He chastises them for their profit, that they may be made partakers of his holiness;" ¶ and we are informed, that it is only "*if need be*," that "they are in heaviness through manifold trials." ** On the other hand, he will not in any case indulge them to their hurt; he promises to give nothing but what is agreeable to his will; and no importunity can reverse this law, though he directs his children to be importunate in praying for such things as he hath promised to bestow, and assures them of success. †† He also shows his displeasure when they offend; ‡‡ he disciplines his children and brings them under the rod; he chastens, rebukes, and scourges them. ‖‖ He does not follow their inclinations in this respect, nor spare for their crying: and he only has complacency in them, and manifests his fatherly love to them, when they act agreeably to his will. §§ The whole of his procedure, therefore, is suited to deliver them from sin, to make them happy when in the way of their duty, and miserable when they depart from it. This is the conduct of Him who exercises infinite love and compassion; and if you act suitably to your character as the children of God, you will endeavour to imitate this high example.

Consider also how the Lord instructs, admonishes, and warns his children. This he does with tenderness, as they are able to bear it; with much earnestness and importunity,

* Psal. lxxxiv. 11. † Luke xi. 13. Matt. vii. 11. ‡ Psal. ciii. 13, 14. ‖ Lam. iii. 32. § Lam. iii. 33. ¶ Heb. xii. 10. ** 1 Pet. i. 6. †† 1 John v. 14. Psal. lxxxv. 12. Luke xi. 9—14, and xviii. 1—8. ‡‡ Amos iii. 2. ‖‖ Heb. xii. 5—11. §§ John xiv. 21, 23, and xv. 10. 1 John iii. 21, to the end.

if we may so speak; persuading them by every motive that is suited to awaken their attention, and to engage their warmest affections; and, with unceasing care and perseverance, giving them line upon line, and precept upon precept; thus using a variety of means to instruct them in the knowledge of his will, that they may cheerfully do it.

Second, One of the strongest inducements to the performance of every parental duty, is the consideration of the consequences which you have reason to expect either from diligence in these duties, or the neglect of them: to this I beg your particular attention.

The bad consequences of neglecting these duties must be evident to every one, from the nature of the thing, and from daily observation and experience. If you are rigorous and severe, you will either crush the spirits of your children, and render them unfit for every employment that requires exertion; or you will provoke their resentment, and produce in their minds an utter aversion to your religious principles and moral injunctions. As the former of these is a melancholy situation, so the latter is a most dangerous one; for when children find themselves unreasonably hemmed in by the iron hand of despotic authority, and deprived of much satisfaction and comfort which they might innocently enjoy, it frequently happens that they embrace the first favourable opportunity to throw off every restraint, and to indulge in all the excesses of youthful intemperance and folly.

On the other hand, the effects of over-indulgence, and slackening too much the reins of government, are equally fatal. None of us know so little of human nature, as to imagine that a child left to himself will not often go astray; and if the most effectual means are not speedily used to reclaim him, he will run on from evil to worse, till he is past all remedy. The Word of God declares this, and in numberless instances it has been fulfilled.

Some indeed, when they come to the years of discretion, will follow a better line of conduct than they have been taught, either by the authority, or the example of their parents. They may be converted by the power of God from the evil of their way; and even when this does not take place, a due consideration of what is necessary for their interest and happiness in this world, may lead them to sobriety and decency of conduct. But is it reasonable to expect this? What are the natural consequences of letting them do as they please? It would amount to a denial of the account which the Scriptures give of the corruption of human nature, did we hesitate to affirm that parents, in this case, have the greatest reason to fear the total ruin of their children.

All this will be acknowledged by every considerate person; but I am persuaded that the views of most people, respecting the advantages arising from the proper government of children, are too limited, and fall short of what is plainly taught in the Word of God. In treating this part of the subject, I must again call your attention to the distinction between religious admonitions, and those which relate merely to that sort of good behaviour which arises from natural principles.

We formerly observed, that it is the indispensable duty of believing parents to instruct their children in the knowledge of the Gospel; and while they do so, they are warranted to pray for the blessing of Him who said, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God." * They have reason also to hope that success will attend their labours; for besides the general expectation which the Scriptures warrant, that God will bless his own Word for the conversion of sinners, parents are commanded to make known the testimony and the works of God to their children, for this purpose, that the generation to come may know them, and may set their hope in God. † And the Apostle Paul seems to hint at the instrumentality of parents in the case of Timothy, when he says, "I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also." ‡ He likewise affirms that Timothy "from a child had known the Holy Scriptures, which, says he, are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith that is in Christ." ‖ The influence of the Word of truth doubtless depends on the sovereign will of God; he is indebted to none, and dispenses his favours as he pleases. We may teach and admonish our children, but God alone can make his own Word effectual for their salvation; and we therefore cannot proceed with an absolute certainty of being the happy means of "turning them from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God." This, however, ought not to prevent us from endeavouring to teach our children the things of God. The same uncertainty of success has no such influence in other cases. Will any of us refrain from using the means of recovery, when the lives of our children are threatened by dangerous bodily diseases, because it is not absolutely certain that God will bless those means? If a mere probability of success, and sometimes a very faint one, encourage us to use every possible exertion in the latter case, why is it otherwise in the former, if we are not more anxious about the temporal, than about the spiritual and eternal happiness of our children?

* Mark x. 14. † Psal. lxxviii. 5, 7. ‡ 2 Tim. i. 5. ‖ 2 Tim. iii. 15.

But I maintain, with respect to a decent and orderly conduct in society, that when parents uniformly attend to the plan of education which the Word of God inculcates, *this will produce the effects intended by it on all children, except those who are destitute of common sense;* though its influence will be more or less complete, according to their different capacities and dispositions. Some are susceptible of more culture than others; but *it is possible to prevent any child from being habitually wicked and ungovernable, who is decidedly capable of distinguishing between right and wrong.*

If you possess the proper government of your children, they will be submissive and orderly in their general deportment while they are in their nonage, and under your immediate inspection and care.

A sufficient proof of this arises from the suitableness of the means to the end proposed. When we consider the salutary nature of chastisement, the influence of gentle, unremitting, and well directed authority, the power of habit, and the consequences that may be expected from instructions and admonitions often repeated, and from the good example of those whom children most esteem, all of which have been illustrated in this and the preceding discourses; we may fairly conclude that, if their habitual conduct be justly censurable, their parents are to blame. And though it is admitted, that the blessing of God is necessary to give success to our endeavours, yet there is a natural connection between the means and the end, which puts it within our reach, and renders us inexcusable if we palpably fail to accomplish it.

The Word of God informs us, that our labours in this respect will be crowned with success. This is often repeated by Solomon in the passages formerly quoted; and I cannot suppose that he would so positively assert, that the happy consequences mentioned in these texts will be produced by reproof and correction, if it can be said justly, that the means which he prescribes have no necessary connexion with the end in view, and consequently may often totally fail of success. We must not, however, understand him as maintaining, that in every particular instance of reproof or chastisement, the end will be immediately and completely gained: for he evidently supposes that there will be frequent occasion for this discipline, and only gives reason to expect, that *upon the whole* we shall be successful in giving wisdom to our children, and driving far from them the foolishness that is bound in their hearts.* Since this assurance is given us in the Word of God, it must be a fact,

* Prov. xxii. 15, xxix. 15.

whoever doubts it, and it cannot be disproved by all the reasoning of man.

There are, indeed, many general affirmations in the Scriptures, which are not meant to be taken absolutely, and will not apply to every case that may be supposed to occur. But wherever we find an express declaration, that certain causes will produce the effects which are ascribed to them, we ought to believe that it will be so, unless it appear also from the Word of God, that there are other causes which on some occasions may prevent those effects. Now, if we maintain that children may habitually go astray, without any blame on the part of their parents, we must be able to point out some opposite cause which is sufficient to counteract the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and to render them ineffectual. Next to a total want of capacity in young persons, which is admitted to be an effectual bar in the way of training them, the most formidable opposition arises from the foolishness that is naturally bound in their hearts; but this does not operate in the way of preventing the good effects of nurture and admonition, for these are the appointed means by which that foolishness is checked and restrained.

Further, the commandment to *bring up* our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, requires that we should *regulate their conduct* by means of that discipline and instruction which the Lord hath appointed. It is not enough that we show them the way in which they should go; we must *train them up* in it, and not suffer them to depart from it. This surely could not be required in all cases, unless every parent who fears God, and possesses ordinary judgment and prudence, were capable of performing it.

This observation is confirmed by the obligation laid upon elders of Christian churches, "to have faithful children,* not accused of riot, nor unruly, and to have their children in subjection with all gravity;" † and by a similar commandment with respect to deacons, who must "rule their children and their own houses well." ‡ Some people would pause here, and say with astonishment, "May not a good man have bad children? Is it not very possible that he may correct, admonish, exercise authority, and do every duty to them; and that, in spite of all this, they may be unfaithful, riotous, and unruly?" This I

* By *faithful children* we must not understand believers of the Gospel, for parents are not capable to make them such. This character is opposed to their being riotous and unruly, and therefore must imply sobriety, and an uniform subjection to the authority of their parents. In these respects they are required to be *faithful.*

† 1 Tim. iii. 4. Tit. i. 6. ‡ 1 Tim. iii. 12.

absolutely deny. How could it be made a qualification of office-bearers in churches, without which they cannot lawfully be appointed to these offices, if it were not always in their power? A man is supposed to *desire* the office of a bishop, or overseer, without any pride or self-sufficiency, from a single eye to the glory of God, and the good of his people. But, however much his mind may be set upon it, he cannot be allowed to exercise the office without this qualification; and though his gifts in other respects should be eminently useful, a church of Christ cannot enjoy them, *because his children are riotous, and unruly.* Can any thing be a stronger proof that Christian parents are obliged to regulate the conduct of their children, that it is in their power to do so, and consequently that they cannot be guiltless when they do it not? For surely it would be most unreasonable to suppose, that a man's gifts must be unoccupied, his desire to be employed in a good work refused, and his usefulness prevented, *on account of an accidental circumstance, in which he is not to blame.* Nor can we imagine, that the children of elders and deacons will be more easily trained than those of other people: the same variety of natural dispositions that we meet with in other children, must be expected in them; but the Scripture makes no allowance for this, they are bound at all rates to have them in subjection.

When the Apostle makes it necessary that a Christian teacher should be "One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity," he must be understood to affirm that he who has not his children thus in subjection, *does not rule his own house well.* And when he draws this inference from his neglect, "For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?" it is plain that he directs Christians to judge of his fitness to bear rule in a church, by his way of proceeding in the government of his family, and *the effect of this upon his children.* In the parallel passage in his epistle to Titus, he says nothing at all of ruling, yet he must have this in view when he characterises the children of elders. "Having faithful children," &c., is therefore to the same purpose as if he had said, "One that ruleth well his own house."

It cannot be justly pleaded that this is an obligation peculiar to office-bearers; for though they ought to *excel* in the qualifications laid down by the Apostle, yet all those qualifications, except that of being apt to teach, and not being a novice, are incumbent on every Christian. And whatever idea may be entertained of the superior talents of men who are qualified to be public teachers, and the propriety of those who are called to the office of

rulers giving proof of their fitness to exercise authority; it will not be easy to show that there is any thing, *with respect to children*, implied in "ruling their own houses well," which is not as strongly implied in "bringing up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

What reason can be assigned why Christian masters are not made equally answerable for the conduct of their servants, (whatever duties they owe them in other respects,) nor commanded to make *them* faithful, sober, and submissive? Because this is most assuredly beyond their power. But mark the difference here,—it is never hinted or supposed in the Word of God, that there is any insurmountable obstruction in the way of training children to habits of virtue. If such impossibility really did exist, this hopeless task would not have been assigned to us.

These premises necessarily lead to the following conclusion. When a child is riotous, ungovernable, and given to any wicked practices, it may be concluded that his parents do not bring him up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, though we should not have an opportunity of discerning any material fault in their conduct. It would not indeed be candid to form this judgment on account of trifling things, or even glaring instances of misconduct, if these seldom occur, for we are not to look for perfection either in parents or children; children who are under the best government, may be tempted, on some occasions, to commit very heinous crimes; but if they are *habitually* wicked and ungovernable, you cannot be guiltless. Make no excuses here. You may complain of his untoward disposition, but whose fault is this? It is *your* business to make him tractable. You may say that you both admonish and correct him. Perhaps you do so; and it is very possible that you may correct him too much, for parents often, through their own misconduct, give many stripes to no purpose. What then must be done? If neither words nor blows have any tendency to reclaim, must your child be abandoned to every foolish and wicked course, and given up for lost?—God forbid. But in this case, consider your own deficiency rather than your son's. He is undoubtedly in your power while he is young; and if you constantly and invariably use the means which God hath appointed, you may be assured of success, though not in every case to the same extent.

Indeed, it appears to me that, if proper means were uniformly and timeously used, it would seldom or never be found necessary to make children suffer bodily pain after four or five years of age. If this opinion be right, it will furnish you with a strong proof that the Lord's method of training is truly

merciful, and that, in departing from it, we are in danger of exercising cruelty towards our own defenceless children, whom we ought to cherish and protect!

Hitherto I have spoken only of the influence of parental discipline and admonition, while children are under the immediate inspection and care of their parents; but it appears to me that the good effects of this training will also continue when they grow up to manhood. Parents, as we have seen, ought not only to admonish and correct their children, but also to bring them into a constant habit of regularity and good behaviour; and this we suppose ought to continue from fifteen to twenty years. Sometimes the period may be longer, but when it is shorter, by the death of parents or other circumstances, such children are not trained up to maturity; and when parents commit them to the charge of others at an early age, they are unfaithful to their trust, unless this proceed from some very urgent cause. Any case of this nature does not fall within the present remark. But when so long a period of their lives is spent in sobriety, industry, and good behaviour, is it reasonable to suppose that they will have any inclination to become idle, dissipated, and worthless members of society? Do we not see thousands who, without the benefit of such education, are just and benevolent, outwardly decent in their conduct, and free from such vices as the world in general condemn? And surely this is much more to be expected, when children have been brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Aside from every religious principle, regard to their own interest and happiness in a worldly view, will secure them against open profanity and dissolute behaviour; and, being so long habituated to sobriety and decorum, they will find it no mortification to continue in the same course.

Such are the natural effects of a good education in youth, and the Word of God also gives reason to hope that these effects will be produced by it; for Solomon says, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." * I am inclined, for my own part, to consider this position as one that will seldom completely disappoint the hopes of affectionate parents, though I confess there is a better ground for making exceptions here than in the former case. Parents cannot be answerable in the same degree for the conduct of their children, after they are grown up to manhood, as when they are under their immediate inspection, and subject to their authority. But though you should not be fully convinced that such extensive happy consequences will always result from

* Prov. xxii. 6.

the proper training of children, it is a great encouragement if you believe that it will be so in general, with some exceptions; and this, I trust, will be admitted by all.

As I am very much persuaded that parents will exert themselves in training their children, in the same proportion as they perceive that beneficial consequences will be produced by it; and that they cannot have a due conviction of their own deficiencies in this respect, while they do not reckon themselves accountable for the misconduct of their children; I shall endeavour to obviate the principal objections against what has been advanced on this head.

Instances of good men, who have done every thing in their power to train up their children according to the rule of the Word of God, and were not able to prevent them from going astray, will be urged as an insurmountable objection against all that has been said. Scriptural examples of this will be produced, and many instances that have fallen under our own observation, of which you may think yourselves perfectly informed. I acknowledge that if examples fully in point could be produced, there would be some reason to doubt whether parents have as much in their power as I have ascribed to them; and so far I must yield to the objection, by admitting that the children of good men have often gone astray. But what evidence have you, that these men conscientiously attended in all respects to the rule of the Word of God in training their children? Can you be as certain of this, as you ought to be of the truth of the Scriptures which maintain the opposite? All that is necessary on my part, is to deny this assertion till satisfactory evidence is brought to confirm it, and this I am persuaded never can be done. There may be very essential failings in the management of their children, while in other respects people conduct themselves with propriety; and of this I have seen undeniable instances, in some of those very cases that have been adduced to give force to this objection. It is much safer, therefore, to adhere to the plain declarations of the Word of God, and to the examples by which these are confirmed.

It may also be objected, that allowing such extensive influence to the government of earthly parents, is a denial of the corruption of human nature, and the necessity of Divine grace to deliver from the power of sin. This objection has been anticipated by several remarks in this and the preceding discourses. I fully admit that the special grace of God is necessary to change the heart by the influence of the Gospel, and to lead any person to universal obedience from the motives which God approves. But the most extensive view that we

can take of man's depravity, both in regard to his principles and conduct, does not oblige us to conclude that every one must be openly wicked and profane; for it is undeniable that there are many worthy and respectable members of society who are ignorant of the Gospel, and do not even profess to be religious. Those who object on this ground, will also admit that some instances can be produced of children, who, in consequence of their having been brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, were restrained from immoral and disorderly conduct in their nonage, and continued in the same course when they arrived at the years of maturity; nay, they will own that this is in general to be expected. What difference then is there between their sentiments and mine? None in point of *principle;* for if they admit that the salutary effects which I have ascribed to parental discipline and admonition, will frequently take place, we exactly agree in principle, and only differ about the application of it in other instances, which are precisely similar in so far as this principle is concerned.

Another objection arises from the various dispositions of children, and the different degrees of wickedness which are supposed to be in them. It is a pretty general opinion, that some are born into the world with more wicked inclinations than others, and therefore cannot be brought to submit themselves to any rule or authority;—that one is born a thief, another a liar, a third a drunkard, a fourth a murderer, and so on;—and that these propensities are so rooted in the hearts of such devoted beings, that they must fulfil them in spite of all opposition. But I have no belief in this doctrine, and shall endeavour to expose its falsehood.—That all mankind are corrupt, I have not the smallest doubt; and that a disposition to all the evils just mentioned is naturally in the heart of every man, appears from the dreadful account of human corruption which is given in the third chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, and in many other parts of the Scripture. But that one is born more wicked than another, I cannot possibly admit, as the assertion involves in it this necessary consequence, that God is the author of sin. If all men do not derive the same nature from Adam, and if any one person exceeds another in such wicked propensities as are purely natural, must not the difference arise merely from the will of the great Creator? But though we should never be able to account for the different degrees of sinfulness which we see in the human race, we must not ascribe it to this. I suppose the whole of this difference arises from external circumstances; such as education, company, opportunities, temptations, and a thousand occur-

rences, which are exceedingly varied in the lot of different persons, and even in what befals children of the same family.

I do not question that many dispositions, not sinful in themselves, of which we see a great variety in children as well as in adults, are born into the world with them, and may perhaps depend in some measure on the constitution and frame of the body; though there can be no doubt that such dispositions as we are in use to call natural, are also partly formed by education and habit. It is likewise evident that various dispositions require various treatment, and that some children will be more easily managed, and need less severity than others; while the best method of training them will not always be accompanied with equal success; but it does not follow from this, that there are *any* who cannot be brought under the authority of their parents.

Diseases too are hereditary, and so is the sinful bias of the human mind, but with this difference—We may inherit peculiar diseases from our immediate progenitors, of which many of our species are entirely free; but, though a corrupt nature is also immediately communicated to us by our parents, yet this is not on account of their sins, but solely on account of our connection with Adam in his one offence, which we have in common with all his posterity; and this places every individual of the human race exactly on the same footing in this particular. The children of saints, and the children of the most abandoned profligates, equally partake of the same corrupt nature which Adam communicated to Abel as well as to Cain.* How else can we understand the description that is frequently given in the Word of God, of the general and total depravity of human nature; which is uniformly represented as being the same in its source and principle, though various in its effects? All, without exception, are "enemies unto God in their minds by wicked works;" † and all are "hateful, and hating one another. ‡ "There is *none* righteous, no, *not one:* there is *none* that understandeth, there is *none* that seeketh after God. They are *all* gone out of the way, they are *together* become unprofitable; there is *none* that doeth good, no, *not one.*" ‖

* Children who have profligate parents very often imitate their behaviour, and resemble them in all their wicked dispositions; but the question is, whether does this arise from a stronger natural propensity to commit sin than is commonly to be found in children, or from the influence of bad example and pernicious training? Is there not every reason to believe, that the same education and example would corrupt *other children,* as much as it does them?

† Col. i. 21. ‡ Tit. iii. 3. ‡ Rom. iii. 10, 11, 12.

It may likewise be considered as an objection, that while very important consequences are attributed to the care and attention of parents, so great a number of duties are enjoined upon them, and such constancy and perseverance in fulfilling these duties, that very few can be supposed to attain this high degree of perfection in the government of their children; and consequently the effect must cease, as well as the cause. It must be owned, that much attention and diligence is requisite on the part of parents; but I would not be understood as maintaining that perfection is necessary; that those who have reason to hope for success must be such as possess more than ordinary abilities; or that so much time ought to be spent in this business as would occasion the neglect of other duties.

Every thing that is human must be imperfect; and if those only can expect to succeed who are chargeable with no deficiency or neglect, all that has been said will go for nothing, and the happy fruits which the Word of God ascribes to the performance of parental duties, will never be realized. It is evident therefore, that obtaining these fruits must be consistent with human weakness and frailty; and I am persuaded there must be *very essential defects* in the management of children, when they are remarkable for insobriety and riotous behaviour, and refuse to submit to authority. This will never arise from such ordinary failings in the conduct of their parents, as ought to be expected in general among the people of God, nor can it be owing, in most cases, to the want of natural abilities; for it requires no great depth of judgment to manage children. Prudence and discretion indeed are necessary; and where these are wanting, it is not easy to say how the deficiency can be supplied; but people of ordinary understanding, who know how to conduct themselves with propriety in the common affairs of life, are capable of performing all the duties required of parents, so as to accomplish the ends intended by them, provided they act from a deep impression of the fear of God. *This* is true wisdom, and will often lead those who possess it to a judicious and prudent conduct, without much aid from natural talents. And as to the time that may be necessary for a proper attention to these duties, I really believe that much less time is spent in the most laudable training of children, than in spoiling them; and that if one-half of the pains and trouble which is often bestowed on humouring them to their own hurt, and seeking to rectify evils which parents themselves have occasioned, were employed in bringing up children according to the rule of the Word of God, this would be sufficient to produce the salutary consequences attributed to a good education.

I shall only take notice of another objection, namely, that one of the parents may be disposed to obey this precept, and the perverseness of the other may render it ineffectual. This has more force than any of the former objections, though it does not in the least degree affect the principle that we have established; for whatever prevents children from being properly trained must have a bad tendency, if the opposite has a good one. A great deficiency will arise from one of the parents failing in this duty; yet much may be done by the diligence and perseverance of the other party. Few parents are so lost to every sense of duty, as to endeavour to make their children as wicked as themselves, or avowedly to oppose any means that may be used to admonish them, or to correct their faults; though they may live in the neglect of what is incumbent on them, and by their example, and otherwise, counteract the influence of the best admonitions. Those who are connected with such partners in the marriage relation, ought not therefore to be too much discouraged: they may succeed notwithstanding this disadvantage, and at any rate it is their duty to exert themselves to the utmost of their power. It appears also, from the obligation laid upon elders to have faithful children, that *mothers* acting an undutiful part is not a sufficient excuse; as it is very likely that some of those who were chosen to be elders of the first churches, had been joined, before their conversion, to wives who afterwards remained in a state of unbelief, and could not therefore be expected to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Such wives could not lawfully be put away, though it is the bounden duty of Christians, after their conversion, to "marry only in the Lord." *

Third, Another motive is the consideration of your own peace and comfort, which is intimately connected with doing your duty to your children. You must be deeply interested in their happiness; it will give you unspeakable pleasure to see them dutiful and submissive, ready to receive instruction, and growing in wisdom as they grow in years; and every opposite appearance will have a tendency to sink your spirits, and to fill you with the deepest sorrow.† "A foolish son is a grief to his father, and bitterness to her that bare him."‡ If they should be riotous and unruly, how will you be able to bear even the suspicion that this may be owing to your own folly, and inattention to the duties which the Word of God enjoins on Christian parents? The miseries to which their disorderly conduct will expose them in this life, and the danger of everlasting perdition, will pierce you to the heart,

* 1 Cor. vii. 12. 13, 39. † Prov. x. 1. ‡ Prov. xvii. 25.

and bring upon you more shame and anguish than I am able to describe.*

But this is not all. Your own souls are in danger; for though we stand by faith, and enjoy free remission of sins, and the hope of eternal life through the Divine atonement of the Son of God, yet how can we be assured that we are believers in Christ, and partake of his salvation, if we do not conscientiously obey his commandments? Parents have a most important charge committed to them, of which they will be called to render an account at the judgment-seat of Jesus Christ. Various excuses may perhaps at present lull your consciences asleep; but how will you answer at the great tribunal of Him who searcheth the hearts and trieth the reins, to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings? † Be assured that you cannot be guilty of such neglects as are very common among professing Christians, with impunity. I have all along admitted that it is not in your power to teach your children the saving knowledge of the truth; but if they die in their iniquity, and you warn them not, God will require their blood at your hand.‡

Fourth, The last motive that I shall mention, is the glory of God and the honour of the Christian profession. Believers of the Gospel are thus addressed by the Apostle, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." ‖ And again, "Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." § This acceptable service of the living God, from the motives of love and gratitude for his mercy, extends to every thing in which we can be lawfully engaged, and includes in it not only the duties which we immediately owe to God, but all that is incumbent on us in relation to ourselves, and those with whom we are connected. "Whatsoever ye do in word or deed," ye are commanded to "do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him;—and to do all to the glory of God." ¶ It is of great importance to have this in view with respect to our performance of relative duties, by which, in a particular manner, we have it in our power to glorify God, and to show the practical influence of the Gospel, by a train of conduct which the consciences of all men must approve. As we make a profession of the name of Christ, the world will narrowly observe us, and we must expect them to

* Prov. xxix. 15. † Jer. xvii. 10. ‡ Ezek. iii. 18, 20, and xxxiii. 8.
‖ Rom. xii. 1. § 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20. ¶ Col. iii. 17. 1 Cor. x. 31.

censure us more severely than others, when we deviate from the path of duty. If you are inattentive to the duties which you owe to your children, and allow them to be more riotous and unruly than the children of sober worldly people, what a reproach will this bring upon our holy profession!

Some of you may have failed in the performance of these duties, and the time perhaps is gone. You neglected the wholesome discipline which the Lord has appointed, when the opportunity was given you; and now your children are beyond the reach of your authority. You mistook the way of securing their true happiness, and allowed them to follow the bent of their natural inclinations; and the requital they now make, is just what might have been expected;—they are regardless of your satisfaction and comfort, and refuse to submit to your admonitions. Let me entreat you to consider how much you have in this instance departed from the law of God, and dishonoured his holy name. Humble yourselves in his presence, and be earnest to obtain forgiveness through the blood of Christ. It is the greatest of all consolations to a sinner, to hear that there is forgiveness with God, and that he delighteth in mercy. To this we must have recourse on many occasions, and this alone can bear up your minds under the painful reflection that is suggested by these remarks; and while you retain a just sense of your own guilt in this matter, and hope in the mercy of God for the pardon of all your iniquities, I entreat you to give evidence of your repentance, by showing a due concern for others. Exhort parents to attend to the duties which they owe to their children, and point out to them, in the most forcible terms, the evils which may be expected from neglecting to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

Finally, I earnestly beseech those of you who have young children, to hearken to these admonitions, while there is a prospect of doing good by putting them in practice. Begin without delay, and continue with unceasing perseverance, and fervent prayer to God for his blessing on your endeavours: thus will your children give present "delight to your souls," and you may indulge the pleasing hope, that, at some future period, they will gratefully "rise up and call you blessed."

END OF THE DISCOURSES ON PARENTAL DUTIES.

PURITY

OF

CHRISTIAN COMMUNION

AN ANTIDOTE AGAINST

THE PERILS OF THE LATTER DAYS.

IN THREE DISCOURSES.

WITH AN APPENDIX.

"Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold THE TRADITIONS WHICH YE HAVE BEEN TAUGHT, whether by word, or our epistle."—2 THESS. ii. 15.

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PREFACE.

THE following Discourses have no connexion with any *political* cause of alarm. The author, and the people among whom he officiates as one of their Elders, form a just estimate of the value of civil and religious liberty. They are sufficiently aware of every thing that endangers *the latter* in particular, and reckon themselves entitled, on necessary and urgent occasions, to plead those privileges which are secured to them by the laws of their country; as was frequently done with success by the Apostle Paul.* But their principles do not permit them, *in any supposable case*, to resist the civil powers by violent means, to join any *association* in opposition to Government, or to give countenance, in any respect, to that turbulent spirit which tends to produce anarchy and mischief. Their inclination corresponds with an object which the Scripture teaches them to have in view, in offering up to God "supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, for kings, and for all that are in authority;" namely, "*that they may lead a quiet and peaceable life, in all godliness and honesty.*" † When the just and beneficent conduct of RULERS gives them an opportunity to live in peace, they enjoy it with thankfulness; and if at any time it should be otherwise, they would submit to the inconveniences that might arise from this, without approving of the measures which had occasioned them. They yield subjection TO THE POWERS THAT BE, whatever characters they may sustain; not from the motives of slavish fear or worldly ambition,

* Acts xvi. 37—39, and xxi. 39, 40, and xxii. 24—30, and xxv. 9—13.
† 1 Tim. ii. 1, 2.

but in obedience to an express commandment of the God of heaven, and from a deep conviction that subordination among men is beneficial to all ranks in society, and essential to the existence of society itself.*

The Discourses relate solely to a kingdom which is "not of this world." Its *subjects* are those who "are of THE TRUTH, and hear CHRIST'S voice;" † its *blessings*, which they alone enjoy, are of a spiritual and heavenly nature; ‡ its *laws* are written in the hearts of men by THE SPIRIT OF THE LIVING GOD, and regulate the state of their minds, as well as their external conduct; ‖ its *rewards* and its *punishments* have all a reference to the LIFE TO COME; § and its *interests* cannot be promoted or defended, on the part of those who espouse them, by any violent means whatever. One of those perpetual and irreversible decrees by which it is governed, is this, "He that leadeth into captivity, shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword, must be killed with the sword. *Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.*" ¶ Does such a kingdom exist in this sinful world unaided by the power of man, enduring always his contempt, and sometimes the most violent effects of his malignant rage? Who then would scruple to affirm that it is in reality THE KINGDOM OF GOD?

The subjects treated of in this work, have lately occupied the attention of Christians of various denominations in a more than usual degree; which induces the author to hope that it may be acceptable and useful to some who are beginning to free themselves from the shackles of human authority in matters of religion, and to search the Scriptures with unbiassed minds. And though it should meet with a very opposite reception from others who are wedded to human systems of divinity, or interested in their support, he will not be greatly disappointed. Such persons, and all who may be disposed, on whatever ground, to censure the doctrine contained in these Discourses, are requested to observe, that it can only be refuted by *the Word of God;* because it totally disavows *every other standard.* Any candid person, therefore, who may attempt to disprove it,

* Rom. xiii. 1—8. † John xviii. 36, 37. ‡ Eph. i. 3.
‖ Heb. viii. 10. 2 Cor. iii. 3. § John v. 28, 29. ¶ Rev. xiii. 10.

must reckon himself bound to show that it contradicts the doctrine of the New Testament; unless he fairly denies the Divine authority of that book. The author considers the cause in which he is engaged as THE CAUSE OF THE MOST HIGH, whatever imperfection there may be in this attempt to defend it; and to HIM he commits this cause, in the assured confidence that it will at last prevail over all opposition. For "the kingdoms of this world," the far greater part of whom are at present antichristian worshippers, or pagan idolaters, will become THE KINGDOM OF OUR LORD, AND OF HIS CHRIST; and he shall reign for ever and ever.*

* Rev. xi. 15.

EDINBURGH, JULY 8, 1796.

DISCOURSE I.

"This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come: For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away."—2 Tim. iii. 1—5.

The Apostle describes in this passage a dreadful corruption of Christianity, which is foretold in many other parts of the Word of God, particularly the Book of Daniel and the Revelation of John. It began, in some degree, in the first age of Christianity; for this Apostle says, "The mystery of iniquity doth already work;" * and the Apostle John speaks in a similar way, "As ye have heard," says he, "that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists." † This accounts for the cautions frequently given to Christians, examples of which we have in this and the following chapter. These words, "From such turn away," were addressed in the first instance to Timothy, and to all his contemporaries who loved our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and truth; for a warning is immediately given respecting corrupt and deceitful men, who, at that time, committed iniquity under the mask of godliness.‡ Timothy is referred to the practice of the Apostle, as an example for him to imitate; ‖ and to the Holy Scriptures, which he had known from his childhood, and which were able to make him wise unto salvation, § that he might be preserved from the influence of such men. And he is charged in the most solemn manner, "before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom, to preach the Word, to be instant in season, out of sea-

* 2 Thess. ii. 7. † 1 John ii. 18. ‡ 2 Tim. iii. 6.
‖ 2 Tim. iii. 10, 11. § Ver. 14—17.

son," * &c., in order to preserve the disciples of Christ from this growing evil: for he affirms that "evil men and seducers would wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived;" † that the time would come, when professors of the faith would heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and that they would turn away their ears from the truth, and be turned unto fables." ‡ Paul, however, in this and other parts of his writings, chiefly refers to a future period of time, when apostasy from the faith, and its genuine influence, was to become far more general than it had been in his day, and a false profession of Christianity was extensively and fatally to prevail, under the influence of human authority and the power of the Man of Sin.

The perilous times foretold by the Apostle, were to come *in the last days;* which is an epithet frequently applied, both in the Old and New Testament, to the whole of the Gospel dispensation; and sometimes to the latter part of that period wherein "God hath spoken to us by his Son." ‖ Thus, in another prophetic account of the same melancholy subject that now occupies our attention, it is said, "The Spirit speaketh expressly, that *in the latter times* some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils," § &c. Several of the things predicted in this passage, were not accomplished till a considerable time after the apostolic age. Peter also speaks of "scoffers, who would come *in the last days*, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming?" ¶ which appears evidently to refer to the time of Antichrist's reign; and particularly the concluding part of it, when the daring impiety of ungodly scoffers seems to increase, in proportion as their inevitable destruction draws nigh. Jude foretels the coming of these mockers *in the last time*, and speaks of it as a thing well known to Christians, who received this warning on many occasions from the Apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ.** If, then, we are persuaded that Antichrist has long ago come, that the Man of Sin, agreeably to the prediction of Paul, has been revealed, and that, however much he is already "consumed by the Spirit of the Lord's mouth," he is not yet finally "destroyed by the brightness of his coming;" we must be fully convinced, that the days in which we live are the perilous times of which the Spirit of God hath expressly spoken. Should not this momentous consideration induce us to attend to the means of safety, which are also clearly pointed out to us in the Word of God?

* 2 Tim. iv. 1, 2. † Chap. iii. 13. ‡ Chap. iv. 3, 4. ‖ Heb. i. 2.
§ 1 Tim. iv. 1—3. ¶ 2 Pet. iii. 3, 4, 10. ** Jude, ver. 17, 18.

With a view to establish those who have already separated from unscriptural churches, and to convince others who may be insensible to the dangers which surround them, or who, amidst many convictions, neglect this solemn call, "From such turn away," I shall,

I. Enquire what sort of characters those men possess, from whom we are commanded to turn away; and what danger is to be apprehended from them.

II. Illustrate and enforce the commandment, to turn away from men who have a form of godliness, but deny the power thereof.

III. Make some remarks on its extent and its consequences. And

Lastly, conclude with a few practical observations.

I. With respect to the characters of those men from whom we are commanded to turn away, it does not seem necessary to explain the various epithets here given to them by the Apostle. The meaning of these is sufficiently understood, especially when we apply them to other people, and not to ourselves; for all of us have some degree of that criminal selfishness, which is too apt, on many occasions, to make us palliate in ourselves that which we see at once to be a crime in others. The object in view, and which is most essential in the present enquiry, is to determine to what general class, or description of men, those characters belong who are mentioned in this passage. It will be easily perceived, that Paul is not here treating merely of the wickedness of all men in their natural state, as he does in the third chapter of his Epistle to the Romans; for men were always lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, &c. These characters universally abounded at the time in which the Apostle lived, excepting only among those who were washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.* Wherein then consists the singularity of what is affirmed in this passage, concerning the prevalence of wicked characters, without which no remarkable or imminent danger could arise to the followers of Christ, as the Apostle's words cannot be at all considered as prophetical.

An explanation of this is given in ver. 5, where the Apostle sums up the characters he had described in the foregoing verses, in these words, "having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof." Those wicked men, therefore, against whose influence he cautions the true fearers of God, were to

* 1 Cor. vi. 11.

be professors of Christianity; nominal professors indeed, and that of the most unworthy kind; yet not merely such as would call themselves Christians. They were to assume, in some respects, the appearance of the followers of the Lamb, otherwise they could not be said to have a "form of godliness," nor would the Apostle have represented the times in which they were to appear, as "perilous times" to the genuine professors of Christianity; who, on this supposition, would have been in no danger of being deceived by them. He does not, however, ascribe to them the approved form of godliness, which is enjoined and exemplified in the New Testament; but a form which, when examined, will be found to be in many respects of their own invention.

It will further appear that the Apostle, in this shocking enumeration of crimes, does not describe the wickedness of mere heathens, or those entirely ignorant of the Gospel doctrine: when you consider that the same persons are said, ver. 8, to resist the truth, not in an open and avowed manner, as professed infidels always did, but as Jannes and Jambres, by whom are meant the magicians in Egypt; these two names being known to the Apostle, either by tradition, or by immediate revelation, who withstood Moses, by performing, or seeming to perform, some of his miracles.* They did not dispute the reality of those miraculous works which he performed in their presence. They wished only to show that their own power or dexterity was equal to his; and if in this they had succeeded, they would have been equally entitled to be considered as messengers from the Deity, who were empowered to declare his will. In like manner, there were in the first age of Christianity "false Apostles, deceitful workers, the ministers of Satan, who transformed themselves into the ministers of righteousness," as Satan himself, the better to accomplish his malicious purposes, "is transformed into an angel of light."† Men of this stamp gradually increased in number, and in the art of deception. And in general those teachers who, in the perilous times of the Gospel dispensation, sustain the characters mentioned in this passage, must have something favourable

* Exod. vii. and viii.

† 2 Cor. xi. 13—15. There have certainly been instances of men who came fully up to this description. I do not mean, however, to insinuate in any part of these discourses, that all who corrupt the Gospel, or whose profession of faith is invalidated by their conduct, intend to deceive. Many who are active in disseminating the most dangerous errors, are themselves deceived; and the most implacable enemies of the people of God, who have persecuted them even unto death, have thought that this was doing God service, (John xvi. 2.) Their pernicious doctrine has the same effect on

to recommend them to the attention of professing Christians. They put on a fair outside appearance, professing to believe the Gospel, and to be subject to the authority of Christ, assuming perhaps, too, an air of uncommon sanctity and devotion, while they effectually resist the truth by artfully undermining and perverting it, and bring the highest discredit on the doctrine which they profess to hold, by acting in direct opposition to the genuine influence of the truth; for they deny the power of godliness by the general tenor of their conduct, and are "men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith." * Many of them also have resembled the magicians of Pharaoh, by performing false miracles; and in this we see the literal fulfilment of another prophecy concerning the Man of Sin. His coming is said to be "after the working of Satan, with all power, and signs, and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish." †

Paul makes use of the following considerations also, as arguments with Timothy for incessant diligence in preaching the Word, and in reproving, rebuking, and exhorting, with all long-suffering and doctrine; "for," says he, "the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine;" but will "heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears," ‡ &c. These teachers, as well as the people who were blinded by their delusions, must have been Christians by profession; for all this wickedness was to take its rise in those very churches in which Timothy and other faithful servants of Christ then laboured, agreeably to what Paul said to the elders of the church at Ephesus. "Of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them." ‖ The Scripture abounds with prophecies concerning these false teachers, who are represented as bringing in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them; § covetous men, who would make merchandise of their flocks; ¶ grossly impure and immoral in their conduct: ** presumptuous, self-willed, full of pride and lordly dominion, and impatient of every restraint both

those who receive it, whether their teachers are honest men or deceivers; and there is in general a want of fairness and candour in the methods that are taken to establish false doctrine, a handling of the Word of God deceitfully, and a fearless perversion of it, even when those who do so are honestly persuaded of the truth of their own system. This may account for so many things being said in the Scripture about the "cunning craftiness" of false teachers, who are represented as "lying in wait to deceive." (Eph. iv. 14.)

* 2 Tim. iii. 8. † 2 Thess. ii. 9, 10. ‡ 2 Tim. iv. 1—4.
‖ Acts xx. 30. § 2 Pet. ii. 1. ¶ Ver. 3, 15.
** 2 Pet. ii. 10, 12, 13, 14, 18, to the end. Epistle of Jude.

human and divine; for it is also affirmed of them, that they despise government, and are not afraid to speak evil of dignities.* Some of them were to inculcate and exemplify an irrational kind of austerity and mortification to the world, not commanded in the Word of God, with a view to obtain a high reputation for sanctity; while they were at the same time to trample with disdain on many of the commandments of Jesus Christ.† Another striking part of their character is deceit. They *privily* shall bring in damnable heresies.‡ *With feigned words* shall they make merchandise of you. *Beguiling* unstable souls.‖ They allure through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error.§ *With good words and fair speeches* they deceive the hearts of the simple.¶ They *creep* into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins,** &c. And our Lord says, "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheeps' clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits."†† How astonishing is it, that such a sink of wickedness should ever have been considered by rational men, and especially by professing Christians, as having any connection with the holy Gospel of the blessed God, merely because men thus loaded with crimes have impiously dared to call themselves Christians!

A slight attention to the conduct of those nations where Christianity is professed, will convince every impartial enquirer, that many of their teachers and people are described with justice and precision in the prophetic Scriptures which have been mentioned, and in other parts of the Word of God. The description, at least in some of its leading features, does not apply to a few individuals in any one nation, nor at any one particular period only, but to the far greater part of every nation of professing Christians, during many successive ages. I own indeed, that the pre-eminence in all manner of iniquity is due to the Romish Church; that she is "*Babylon the great, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth;*"‡‡ and that the Bishop of Rome is eminently, though not exclusively, "*the Man of Sin, the Son of Perdition*, who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped."‖‖ But alas! it cannot be denied that in our own country, both in the national churches, and among various classes of Dissenters, multitudes of those who assume the Chris-

* 2 Pet. ii. 10. Jude, ver. 8.
† 1 Tim. iv. 1—3.
‡ 2 Pet. ii. 1.
‖ 2 Pet. ii. 14.
§ Ver. 18.
¶ Rom. xvi. 18.
** 2 Tim. iii. 6.
†† Matt. vii. 15, 16.
‡‡ Rev. xvii. 5.
‖‖ 2 Thess. ii. 4.

tian name, and have *a form* of godliness, are "lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, unholy, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God;" and thus deny *the power* of godliness. Some indeed have thrown off the mask, and avowed themselves infidels; but the generality are still in some sort professors of Christ's religion, and a very great number of persons who partake of the most solemn ordinances, sustain one or other of these characters; on account of this the last days are denominated perilous times. These observations are not dictated by the narrow and envious spirit of a party; nor ought I to be suspected of such a motive, while I affirm nothing of any set of men that is not palpably and incontrovertibly true.

It will not be necessary to say a great deal more concerning the danger of these times. The short and imperfect sketch that has being given of the characters which render the times perilous, is sufficient to alarm every serious Christian who regards the safety of his own soul, and who has any just concern for the glory of God, and the salvation of his fellow-sinners. Without tracing the progress and consummation of that mystery of iniquity which was carried on and brought to its perfection by wicked men, under the mask of a form of godliness, I shall take the matter as it now stands, and briefly state some of the perils that arise from the false profession of Christianity, which exists at the present time.

The children of God who are intermixed with these false professors, are exposed to imminent danger. Notwithstanding all their care to avoid heterodox preachers, they frequently hear doctrine not altogether conformable to the Scripture doctrine of the Lord's free and sovereign mercy to the chief of sinners, through the atonement of Christ; which, if it does not subvert them from the faith, cannot edify their souls, and must have a tendency to keep them in bondage. They see men, with whom they walk in religious fellowship, living in sin while they profess to be the followers of Christ; and though they may not imitate their example in all respects, yet their connexion with such men will probably lessen their abhorrence of the crimes committed by them. "Evil communications corrupt good manners;" * and another axiom, which Paul frequently applies to the churches, is most unquestionably true in its general application, "a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump." † However little intimacy there may be between the religious and irreligious part of mixed societies, there is no manner of doubt that their connexion, such as it is, has often

* 1 Cor. xv. 33. † 1 Cor. v. 6. Gal. v. 9.

a baneful influence upon the former. Many of those who make the strictest profession among them, are too much conformed to this world in things which are creditable enough in society, but which are either expressly condemned by the law of Christ, or in their nature opposite to the Spirit of the Christian profession; and in proportion as they follow the maxims and conduct of worldly men, they must lose their relish for the Gospel, and become lukewarm with respect to the things of eternal life.

They live also in the total neglect of many commandments of the Lord Jesus. They overlook altogether the ordinance of baptism, concerning which the Word of God thus addresses all who repent, and believe the Gospel. "Be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins." * They pay no regard to the commandment in the text, "from such turn away," nor to many others of similar import. They remember the Lord's death in the ordinance of the supper only occasionally, instead of attending to it regularly every first day of the week, according to the example of the primitive Christians.† They do not, and indeed cannot, in their present situation, attend to the means which Jesus Christ has appointed for the recovery of brethren who offend against them; ‡ while they scruple not to say the most severe and uncharitable things against some of those with whom they sit down at the table of the Lord. They yield to others those privileges which the members of the New Testament churches enjoyed, particularly their right to judge of the reception and exclusion of members; ‖ and they submit to a total want of the exercise of discipline, without which the purest church on earth, (I do not here speak of a national church,) would become in a very short time a most impure and corrupt society. And as they cannot do good to the souls of others, by following out all the steps of discipline, in order to reclaim them when they go astray, so they themselves lose the immense benefit that would accrue to them from the admonitions of the brethren. § These, and many other things that might be mentioned, clearly show that the days in which a form of godliness prevails without the power of it, are perilous times to the people of God.

The times that are perilous to the children of God, for the reasons that have been mentioned, cannot fail to have a hardening tendency with respect to the world at large. The cor-

* Acts ii. 38. † See Appendix, No. I.
‡ Matt. xviii. 15—17. ‖ Rom. xv. 7. 1 Cor. v. 4, to the end.
§ James v. 19, 20. Jude, ver. 22, 23. Heb. iii. 13, and x. 25.

ruption of the doctrine and precepts of the Gospel, which has been introduced by the Man of Sin; the superstition, idolatry, and persecuting spirit of the Church of Rome; and the ungodly conduct of many who profess Christianity, in Protestant as well as Catholic countries, have contributed, more than any thing else, to render the Gospel of salvation, and the true profession of the name of Christ, completely odious to that numerous class of mankind which may be said to have no religion. None of these things, indeed, *ought* to bring any discredit on the Gospel itself, which is a doctrine according to godliness, nor on those who really believe and obey it. Nay, all that superlative degree of iniquity, which by the influence of the Man of Sin has overspread the world, ought only to confirm us in the faith of Divine revelation; for the whole of it is an exact fulfilment of what was minutely foretold in the Word of God, which also frequently warns us, in the most solemn manner, to beware of the dangers resulting from it. Yet we need not wonder that arguments have been used, or rather that prejudices of the most inveterate kind have arisen from this, against the Divine origin of the Christian faith. Avowed infidels triumph, while many, who from motives of prudence think it best to pay some respect to the religion of their country, without believing it, are confirmed in their infidelity, and prevented from so much as giving a candid hearing to the truth, and its evidence. This is one of those very things predicted in the Word of God, concerning the perilous times of which we now speak; for Peter affirms, with respect to those false teachers who were privily to bring in damnable heresies, that "many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom," says he, "the way of truth shall be evil spoken of." * Thus a stumbling-block has been laid in the way of men, and a more effectual means of preventing their attention to the Gospel has been employed by the pretended friends of Divine revelation, than any that could be devised by its most determined and avowed enemies.

These times also forbode the final overthrow of the Man of Sin, whom the Lord "shall destroy with the brightness of his coming;" † and of all who support his interest, by giving countenance to a false profession of Christ's name. The most awful judgments of God, both of a temporal and spiritual nature, are threatened against Antichrist, who is represented as speaking great words against the most High, wearing out the saints of the most High, and thinking to change times and laws. ‡ On account of his singular and highly aggravated iniquity, which entitles him to be called the *Man of Sin*, he is

* 2 Pet. ii. 2. † 2 Thess. ii. 8. ‡ Dan. vii. 25.

also denominated *the Son of Perdition.** Some of the vials of the wrath of God have already been poured out on his devoted head; he is now in a state of languor and decay; and the time of his final perdition seems to approach. Nor will any of his adherents be in a state of safety, when the Lord comes, in the dispensations of his providence, to perform this work of judgment; for "if any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation." †

II. We shall now endeavour to illustrate and enforce the commandment in the text, "from such turn away." By this commandment, the people of God are directed to separate themselves from those ungodly professors of the Christian faith, whom the Apostle describes in the foregoing verses; and to avoid all such connexion with them, as would either tend to harden them in their iniquity, or to endanger their own safety. The law of Christ, indeed, does not prohibit Christians from common intercourse with the world at large, or from living on friendly terms with their relations and others, who may be infidels, or false professors. On the contrary, it enjoins diligence in our worldly callings, ‡ which necessarily leads to much intercourse with the world, and it commands us to do good to all men as we have opportunity, ‖ which supposes that we are intimately acquainted with the situation of other men, besides "those who are of the household of faith." It must be admitted, however, that believers of the Gospel, when they act suitably to their profession, will principally associate with those who fear God, avoiding all unnecessary intimate correspondence with worldly men. They consider the saints as the excellent ones of the earth, in whom is all their delight, § and are aware, that when they begin to have too much relish for the company and conversation of men who have their portion in this life, and still more when they prefer this to a friendly intercourse with the people of God, their souls are in danger.

In one case only, the law of Christ prohibits keeping company and eating with unbelievers. These are such unbelievers as have been excluded from the churches of Christ; ¶ and even towards persons of this description, it is our duty to behave with affability and discretion, and to do them good when it is in our power, though all intimate correspondence with them

* 2 Thess. ii. 3, 4.
† Rev. xiv. 9, 10.
‡ Rom. xii. 11. Eph. iv. 28.
‖ Gal. vi. 10.
§ Psal. xvi. 2.
¶ 1 Cor. v. 11.

ought to cease till they are brought to repentance. I have no objection against the opinion of those who consider the excommunication of impenitent sinners from the churches of Christ, as included in the injunction to turn away from men who have a form of godliness, but deny the power thereof. This, however, is a distinct thing from avoiding such intimacy with them as the Apostle makes it lawful to have, in some degree, with men of the worst characters, who never were connected with churches formed on the plan of the New Testament.* Both are evidently meant in our Lord's words addressed to his Jewish disciples, "Let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican;" † and Paul in the plainest terms enjoins the former, when he says to a Gentile church, "Put away from among yourselves that wicked person." ‡ This command, however, cannot be obeyed by the disciples of Christ, till they separate themselves from all strangers, and keep the ordinances, as the Apostles delivered them to the first churches.

There are others who esteem it a matter of indifference, whether they have religious fellowship or not with profane and impenitent sinners, provided they do not imitate their wicked conduct; and this they consider as the only thing intended by the Apostle when he says, "from such turn away." It is certainly of the highest consequence that we should avoid all those evils which are ascribed to corrupt professors; and if this is not the direct meaning of the Apostle, when he commands us to turn away from them, it must be strongly implied in every injunction of this nature. A mere external separation from ungodly men, will avail us nothing if we carry along with us the same wicked practices in which they are engaged, or if, after we have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, we are again entangled therein and overcome. ‖ To follow this line of conduct, would be to strain at a gnat and to swallow a camel. It would prove us to be greater hypocrites, and more worthy of condemnation, than the persons from whom we separate. But the Word of God does not suppose that we can escape all the evils which abound among corrupt professors of Christianity, while we remain in fellowship with them. Even in a church of Christ, a root of bitterness may spring up, and trouble them, "and thereby many be defiled;" § and some of the bad consequences arising from the other connexion, have been already mentioned. It is one reason, therefore, why Christ hath instituted the law which separates his people from the

* 1 Cor. v. 10. † Matt. xviii. 17. ‡ 1 Cor. v. 13.
‖ 2 Pet. ii. 20. § Heb. xii. 15.

world, as well as the law of discipline in the churches, that they may be preserved pure from the infection of wicked men, especially of those who profess to know God, and in works deny him.* Besides, the Apostle does not merely command us to turn away from wicked conduct, but from wicked men. It is evident that he has *persons* in his eye, when he says, from *such* turn away; for he immediately adds, "for of this sort are they who creep into houses," &c.

The people of God are therefore obliged, by this injunction, to come out of those religious societies which receive into their communion, men who fulfil the lusts of the flesh; or who, if their outward conduct is decent and respectable, give the most complete evidence of their ignorance of the Gospel, and perhaps, in some cases, of their utter aversion to it. If those who enjoy peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, and feel the constraining influence of his love, were not blinded by the most fatal prejudices, they would not hesitate to obey this commandment. It would appear to them a privilege, as well as a duty, to free themselves without delay from all religious connexion with men who are a dishonour to the Christian profession, and with whom they cannot have fellowship in the solemn ordinances of the Gospel, without giving countenance to the profanation of these ordinances, and exposing themselves to all the perils of the latter days.

The nature and indispensable obligation of this duty will appear from the following remarks:—

First, There was no outward visible distinction, in the kingdom of Israel, between the true children of God, and the children of Abraham according to the flesh. The law given to that people in their national capacity, was such as a nation of this world is capable of obeying. It regulated only the external conduct; for Paul could affirm that, before his conversion, he was, "touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless."† All who in this respect were subject to its precepts, enjoyed the temporal blessings which it secured to the obedient, and were entitled to partake of all Divine ordinances.‡ Thus far, believers and unbelievers were confounded. They joined indiscriminately in the worship of the true God, and this national worship was not a human invention; it was instituted by the God of their fathers, who called Abraham from among the heathen, multiplied his seed, redeemed them from their bondage in Egypt, revealed his will to them by Moses, and put them in possession of the promised land.

* Tit. i. 15, 16. † Phil. iii. 6.
‡ Lev. xxvi. 3—13. Deut. xxviii. 1— 5.

But there was a line of separation, or a middle wall of partition, as the Apostle calls it, between them and the Gentile nations.* They were prohibited, under the most severe penalties, from joining in the worship of the heathen, from intermarrying, or having any affinity with them, and from adopting their customs, or imitating their conduct in a variety of particulars.† From the worship of the tabernacle and temple, the heathen nations were entirely excluded, except such of them as became proselytes to the Jewish religion; and these last were only admitted as worshippers in the outer court. The Gentiles were "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world;" ‡ while to the Israelites alone pertained "the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises." ‖ Such strict regulations were appointed with respect to their food, as rendered it impossible for them to have familiar intercourse with the nations around them; many of those animals which were the common food of the Gentiles, being made unclean to them by the law of Moses. § On all these accounts, they esteemed it "an unlawful thing for a man that was a Jew to keep company, or to come unto one of another nation;" as Peter declares, after God had showed him that he should not now call any man common or unclean. ¶

The people of Israel were thus separated unto God as his peculiar people. He distinguished them from all other nations, gave them his statutes and ordinances, set his tabernacle in the midst of them, and dwelt among them as their God.** This relation, in which the fleshly seed of Abraham stood to the Most High, was only of an outward and temporal nature, and intended as a type or figure of that spiritual and eternal relation, which subsists between God and the people of the new covenant, who are redeemed by the blood of Christ, out of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, and made kings and priests unto God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.†† No *earthly nation* ever was, or could be the antitype of Israel according to the flesh. Our Lord said to the Jews, "The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof;" ‡‡ and we perceive, from the way in which Peter addresses the

* Eph. ii. 14, 15. † Exod. xxiii. 32, 33, and xxxiv. 12—18. Deut. vii. 1—6, and xviii. 9—15. ‡ Eph. ii. 12. ‖ Rom. ix. 4. § Lev. xi. ¶ Acts x. 15, 28. ** Psal. cxlvii. 19, 20. Deut. iv. 1—9. Exod. xxix. 45, 46. Lev. xxvi. 11, 12. †† Rev. i. 5, 6, and vii. 9. ‡‡ Matt. xxi. 43.

strangers scattered throughout a variety of countries, what class of people was pointed out by Jesus as inheriting the blessings of this kingdom. Of these, as a part of the whole redeemed company gathered out of all nations, he says, "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an *holy nation*, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:* applying to them, in a much higher sense, the epithets which had been given to the holy typical seed under the Old Testament dispensation. †

If, then, the nation of Israel was separated from all others in the whole of their typical economy and worship, does it not necessarily follow that true believers, under the Gospel dispensation, who are the antitypes of Israel after the flesh, ought to have no fellowship, in their spiritual worship, with those who do not visibly belong to the kingdom of heaven? But with respect to preaching the Gospel to all men for their salvation, and maintaining civil intercourse with them, God hath showed us that we should not call any man common or unclean. How else could they appear to be a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, &c., in distinction from the world around them? Is that kind of separation which is enjoined in the New Testament, of less importance than the typical separation of the ancient people of God from the Gentile nations? Or will any dare to affirm, that the institutions of Christ under the Gospel, may be profaned with more impunity than the carnal ordinances of Moses?

Second, The distinction which was to take place between the true children of God, and outward nominal professors who boast of their external privileges, was pointed out by John the Baptist, who came to prepare the way of the Lord, as the forerunner of the great Messiah. "When he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance: and think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. I indeed baptise you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptise you with the Holy Spirit, and with fire: Whose fan is in his hand, and he will

* 1 Pet. ii. 9. † Exod. xix. 5, 6.

throughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." * He sets aside all their vain pretensions, intimating that their descent from Abraham would be of no avail in obtaining the blessings of Messiah's kingdom; that the Almighty power of God is necessary to make men the true children of Abraham; and that, if they claimed the honour of being such, they must show it by their fruits. He informs them, that one mightier than he was about to come, who would effectually distinguish between the wheat and the chaff, and take the most signal vengeance on many of those who said, We have Abraham to our father, but were, notwithstanding, the enemies of God, and the children of the devil.

These words of John, not only show, that when the kingdom of the Messiah should be established, those only who gave evidence of their faith in Christ, by obeying him, would really be the children of Abraham; or, what is the same thing, "the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus;" but also, that no others were then to be reckoned such, or to be accounted worthy of the privileges of Christ's kingdom. Before the coming of John the Baptist, there were in the Jewish nation some of the true children of God, "who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." † But they were intermixed with unbelievers, and enjoyed, in common with them, the external privileges of the kingdom of God, which, in a typical sense, included the whole nation of Israel. John must therefore be understood as announcing an alteration *in this respect*, when he informed the Jews that neither they, nor any others, who did not bring forth fruits meet for repentance, would be *considered* as subjects of Messiah's kingdom, nor entitled to the blessings and immunities of the happy people over whom he was to reign.

* Matt. iii. 7—13. † John i. 13.

DISCOURSE II.

"This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come: For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away."—2 Tim. iii. 1—5.

After observing in a former discourse what sort of characters those men possess from whom we are commanded to turn away; and what danger is to be apprehended from them, we began to illustrate and enforce the commandment itself; First, By the separation of the ancient typical people of God from the nations around them; and Second, By the doctrine of John the Baptist. We now observe,

Third, That the doctrine delivered by Jesus Christ himself, during his personal ministry, illustrates and confirms what was declared by his messenger who prepared his way. In our Lord's discourse with Nicodemus, he teaches the necessity of men being born again, in order to their becoming subjects of the kingdom of God. He says, "Except a man be born again" —born of water and of the Spirit—"he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." * And he distinguishes this from the fleshly birth, which entitled the seed of Abraham to the privileges of God's ancient kingdom, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." † He addressed the Pharisees, who were the strictest sect among the Jews, as a race of carnal men, who, with the highest pretensions to religion and zeal for the glory of God, were grossly ignorant of the true character of God, and of their duty both to him and to their fellow-men. He exposed their hypocrisy

* John iii. 3, 5. † Verse 6.

in a variety of particulars, their intolerable pride, their covetousness and extortion, their profane swearing coloured over with religious pretexts, their bigotry, and persecuting spirit; and thus addressed them, "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?" * He repelled all their claims founded on their being the seed of Abraham, and having one father, even God. To these he answered, "If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham. But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God: this did not Abraham—If God were your father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God—Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do." † He told them that the kingdom of God would be taken from them, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. "Many," says he, "shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God: But *the children of the kingdom* shall be cast into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" ‡ He delivered a prophecy concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, containing a most minute and particular account of the things which were to precede this awful judgment, the signs of his coming for this purpose, and the accumulated sufferings which were then to be heaped upon the Jewish nation; ‖ the whole of which was exactly fulfilled, and issued in their complete destruction, both as a nation and as the chosen people of God.

Will it be affirmed, notwithstanding all these things, that the kingdom of Israel, which it is admitted was once the typical kingdom of God, ought to be considered by Christians as an example for their imitation? Would you lend any aid in establishing or supporting such a kingdom as that which hath already suffered the most signal vengeance of the God of heaven? A multitude of carnal men, wallowing in all the lusts of this world, yet claiming a relation to God as their father, and pretending to worship him! Are there any real believers of the Gospel, who so entirely lose sight of the glorious things affirmed of the kingdom of the Messiah, both by ancient prophets, and by Christ himself and his Apostles, as to debase it in such a manner? One could scarcely believe it possible, were it not contained in the prophetic Scriptures, and exemplified before our eyes.

To return to the doctrine of Christ, who, in describing his

* Matt. xxiii. throughout.
† John viii. 39, 40, 42, 44.
‡ Matt. xxi. 43. Chap. viii. 11, 12.
‖ Matt. xxiv.

kingdom, testifies, in the good confession which he witnessed before Pontius Pilate, "My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence." * His kingdom is so diametrically opposite to every thing that is worldly, that men who judge from worldly principles, are at a loss to understand the description of it. They know not what is meant by a spiritual and heavenly kingdom. Without all peradventure, however, the kingdom which Jesus came to establish is of this nature, as appears from its being often denominated "the kingdom of heaven."

The *subjects* of it are spiritual, and born from above, as we have seen: they are not of this world, even as Christ himself was not of this world. † He describes them as being "of the truth;" and this is that truth which he had heard of God, and came in his name to declare; for when he confesses that he was a king, he adds, "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth." ‡ He testified that he himself was the Christ, the Messiah, or anointed Saviour, declaring that the Spirit of the Lord God was upon him; because he had anointed him "to preach the Gospel to the poor," and sent him "to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised; to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." ‖ He testified that he was the Son of God, "who is in the bosom of the Father;" § who existed "before Abraham," ¶ and had glory with the Father before the world was; ** that the Father also "hath committed all judgment unto the Son, that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father;" †† that "he and his Father are one;" ‡‡ and that "the Son of Man, who came down from heaven," while he spoke to men upon earth "was in heaven." ‖‖ He declared also that "he came to give

* John xviii. 36. † John xv. 19, and xvii. 14, 16.
‡ John xviii. 37. ‖ Luke iv. 18—23.
§ Matt. xvi. 16, 17. John x. 36, and i. 18. ¶ John viii. 58.
** John xvii. 5. †† John v. 22, 23. ‡‡ John x. 30.
‖‖ John iii. 13.

These sayings of Christ, as well as many other express declarations in the Word of God, show in the clearest manner, not indeed that he is the Son in his Divine nature abstractedly considered; but that he who is the Son of God, and who came of the seed of David according to the flesh, "is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen." (Rom. ix. 5.) He is denominated the Son of God on account of his incarnation; for the angel said to Mary, "that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God," (Luke i. 35;) and it was when "the Word was made flesh,

his life a ransom for many," * and that every one who seeth the Son and believeth on him, shall have everlasting life; and he will raise him up at the last day.† This is the truth which he came to testify, and which he confirmed by miraculous works, and particularly by rising again from the dead, by which "he was declared to be the Son of God with power." ‡

The subjects of his kingdom "are of this truth" *by believing it*, in consequence of Divine illumination; for "they are all taught of God; and every one that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto Christ." ‖ In his intercessory prayer to the Father, he says concerning his disciples, "I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world.—I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me." § His disciples or subjects are lovers of this truth, as it reconciles them to God, and is the foundation of all their hope for eternity. They are obedient to that form of doctrine into which they are moulded,¶ conformed to Christ, and willing to suffer with him in this world, in the hope of being glorified together with him; ** for he says, "Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the Gospel's, the same shall save it." †† In this manner he characterises those who are of the truth, "Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice;" ‡‡ and he describes his sheep in the same way, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me." ‖‖ On the contrary, a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers. §§ No man, therefore, can belong to the kingdom of Christ, unless he is taught of God to know the truth, to enjoy its consolation, to obey it from the heart, and to follow such a line of conduct as will make it appear that he is not of this world.

and dwelt among men, full of grace and truth, that they beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father," (John i. 14.) He is also the Son of God, as being the first begotten of the dead, and exalted to the right hand of the Father: possessing universal dominion as the heir of all things, and the prince of the kings of the earth. (Acts xiii. 33, compare with Psal. ii. 7, to the end. Col. i. 18. Heb. i. 2. Rev. i. 5. Psal. lxxxix. 27.)

* Matt. xx. 28. † John vi. 40. ‡ Rom. i. 4.
‖ John vi. 45. § John xvii. 6, 8. ¶ Rom. vi. 17.
** 2 Tim. ii. 12. Luke xii. 32. James i. 12, and v. 7, 8.
†† Mark viii. 34, 35. ‡‡ John xviii. 37. ‖‖ John x. 27. §§ John x. 5.

The *immunities and privileges* of the kingdom of Christ are not worldly; for while the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings, in heavenly places in Christ, * he hath promised nothing more than food and raiment in relation to temporal enjoyments. † These are not the portion of his people, and they have no assurance of freedom from affliction in this world, but the contrary; for through much tribulation they must enter into the kingdom of God. ‡ The inheritance itself, which is the principal blessing that belongs to the subjects of this kingdom, is incorruptible, undefiled, and fadeth not away, and is reserved in heaven for those who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation. ‖

The *means of establishing, defending, and promoting the interests* of this kingdom, are not worldly. No service was ever done to it by the riches, power, and splendour of this world; nor did it ever gain any real ascendency by means of human craft and policy, or by the enticing words of man's wisdom. It was at first established merely by the preaching of the Gospel, which proclaims "peace on earth, and good-will towards men." The instruments employed for this purpose were such as men esteemed foolish, weak, base, and contemptible; but while they had to combat with all the power of earth and hell, the weapons of these messengers of God, which were not carnal, were "mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds, casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." §

Our Lord shows in the clearest manner, that the sword cannot be used in his kingdom, not even for the purpose of defending it, when he says, "If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight that I should not be delivered to the Jews." I say *cannot be used;* for those who have taken this method to advance or defend the kingdom of Christ, always meant, in some respect or other, to establish tenets in direct opposition to it. Admitting that some of the children of God themselves have been so far deceived as to take the sword in defence of their religion, or in order to compel men to profess the faith, it is impossible, in the nature of the thing, that, in this particular, they could be actuated by a desire to propagate or defend the true religion, though they ignorantly thought so; because it does not admit of any

* Eph. i. 3. † Matt. vi. 30—33. Luke xii. 28—32. 1 Tim. vi. 6—8.
‡ Acts xiv. 22. ‖ 1 Pet. i. 4, 5. § 2 Cor. x. 4, 5.

such defence. It suffers more by the violence of its friends, than by all the violence that can be directed against it by its most inveterate enemies. And we may lay it down as a sure principle, that whenever men begin to fight in the cause of religion, they have something else in view than the religion of Christ.

It is absolutely necessary, in the present state of human affairs, that a worldly kingdom should defend itself by violent means, both against external and internal enemies. This is admitted in what our Lord says to Pilate; and in Paul's description of the power of the civil magistrate. "He beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil."* I do not say so with a view to give any countenance to destructive wars. No sober-minded person can hesitate to pronounce all *offensive wars* unlawful. They arise from the lusts of men, from pride, ambition, avarice, and revenge; and one of the parties at least must be answerable for all the blood that is shed. It may sometimes, however, be difficult to determine which party is the aggressor; for it frequently happens in these matters, as in private quarrels, that both are to blame. A kingdom of this world may exist without fighting for conquest, or in order to revenge insults which might be otherwise accommodated. Nay, its real happiness and prosperity depend, in a great measure, on avoiding war; for it is the bane of human society, the chief destroyer of earthly comforts, and an extensive mean of hastening the perdition of souls. But still the sword is necessary to defend a nation of this world against its enemies; this mean of defence is essential to its safety, and even to its existence: for otherwise it would soon be dismembered, and torn in pieces.

Now, in this respect, our Lord distinguishes his kingdom from all earthly kingdoms. "If my kingdom were of this world," says he, "then would my servants fight," &c. It was impossible to have given a more conclusive proof of what he asserts. Notwithstanding his being surrounded by chosen friends, on whose fidelity he could have depended had he inclined to make them warriors, and having many among the Jews who were willing to espouse his cause, and who on one occasion would have taken him by force to make him a king;† he suffered himself to be apprehended, bound, insulted, and dragged to death, without attempting the smallest resistance. When one of his servants began to use the sword in his defence, he miraculously healed the wound that was inflicted by it, and

* Rom. xiii. 4; see also 1 Pet. ii. 14. † John vi. 15.

said to his mistaken friend, "Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword." * How then can that kingdom be of this world, the subjects of which are prohibited from fighting in defence of their King and Lord? Would to God that all the professed servants of Christ, in every age, had in this respect acted suitably to the nature of his kingdom. What an immense slaughter of the human race would have been prevented!

Jesus also not only distinguishes his kingdom from worldly kingdoms in general, but from the ancient kingdom of God in Israel, for he says, "*now* is my kingdom not from hence:" which seems to intimate that it had been otherwise in former times, and that he was now going to establish a new kingdom, altogether different in its nature and principles from any thing that had hitherto taken place in the world.

From this brief summary of the doctrine of Christ concerning the characters of those who were to be *accounted* his disciples, and the nature of his kingdom, it appears that none ought to partake of the ordinances which he hath instituted but those who are of the truth, who hear his voice, and who like him are not of this world: and consequently, that it is the duty of real believers of the Gospel, to observe Christ's ordinances in a state of separation from all whom they can discern to be unbelievers, and worldly men.

Fourth, The practice of the Apostles, and other first ministers of the Word, exactly corresponded with our Lord's doctrine on this subject; for they administered the ordinance of baptism, and received into churches those only who, by their confession of the faith, appeared to be the disciples of Christ, and subjects of the kingdom of heaven. Even the disciples of John "were all baptised of him in the river of Jordan, *confessing their sins*." † When he warned them of their danger, and preached the doctrine of the kingdom of heaven, they asked him, "What shall we do then?" He gave them general instructions to regulate their conduct, similar to those afterwards given by Jesus Christ and his Apostles. ‡ He only preached, however, that the kingdom of heaven was at hand, calling men on this account to repentance. ‖ We cannot therefore expect to find, in the time of his ministry, such a marked distinction between believers and unbelievers, as that which appears in the doctrine and practice of the Apostles after the resurrection of Jesus, when the kingdom of heaven actually

* Matt. xxvi. 51, 52.
† Mark i. 5.
‡ Luke iii. 10—15.
‖ Matt. iii. 2.

came in all its divine simplicity and glory, and was established among men on the earth, by the power and grace of the Most High.

The three thousand persons who were baptised on the day of Pentecost, were first converted to the Christian faith by the sermon which Peter preached with the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven. "They were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter, and to the rest of the Apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?" And when Peter had called them to "repent, and be baptised every one of them in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, they gladly received his word." * These were not the whole of that great multitude, who on this occasion heard him preach the Gospel; for, among other things, he says to them, "Save yourselves from this untoward generation." † The persons who thus repented received the Word with gladness, were baptised, and "were on the same day added unto them;" that is, to the Church of Christ at Jerusalem; the hundred and twenty brethren mentioned in the foregoing chapter. "And they continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. ‡ These were not mere forms; their whole hearts were engaged in the service of God, and their subsequent history gives abundant evidence of the reality of their faith. Those also whom the Lord afterwards added to this church daily, were "such as should be saved." ‖ The whole body is termed "the multitude of them that believed:" and they were "of one heart, and of one soul." §

A similar account is given of those who were baptised in the city of Samaria, to whom Christ was preached by Philip the Evangelist. "The people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did.—And there was great joy in that city." ¶ They had formerly been bewitched with the sorceries of Simon to such a degree, that they were induced to say, "This man is the great power of God.—But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptised, both men and women. Then Simon himself believed also, and was baptised." ** In like manner, when the eunuch of Ethiopia, to whom Philip preached Jesus, said, on coming to a certain water, "See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptised? Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And

* Acts ii. 37, 38, 41. † Verse 40. ‡ Verse 41, 42.
‖ Acts ii. 47. § Acts iv. 32. ¶ Acts viii. 6, 8.
** Acts viii. 10, 12, 13.

he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.—And they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptised him." * This Ethiopian also enjoyed the consolation of the truth which Philip had preached to him, for " he went on his way rejoicing."†

Lydia and her household were baptised, after hearing from Paul the glad tidings of salvation. Of her it is affirmed that the Lord opened her heart, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul;‡ and of her household, it is affirmed that it consisted of brethren who were comforted by Paul and Silas.‖ These two messengers of peace spake the Word of the Lord to the jailer at Philippi, and to all that were in his house; he and all his were baptised straightway, and he " rejoiced, believing in God with all his house."§ When Paul preached the Gospel at Corinth, " Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house: and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptised," ¶ among whom were Crispus, Gaius, and the household of Stephanus; ** and of this household it is affirmed, that they were the first-fruits of Achaia, and had addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints. ††

So far as I recollect, these are all the instances of the baptism of particular persons that are recorded in the New Testament, except the baptism of our Lord himself, and that of the Apostle Paul; and the whole of them clearly evince, that believers of the Gospel are the only fit subjects for baptism. In this way, the Apostles pointedly fulfilled the commission which they had received from Jesus Christ, " Teach all nations, *baptising* them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." ‡‡ " Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth, and is *baptised*, shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." ‖‖ And they also taught those whom they had *baptised*, to observe all things whatsoever Christ had commanded them. §§

We have seen already what sort of persons the church at Jerusalem consisted of, which was intended as a model to all succeeding churches; and we may now attend to the description that is given of some of the other churches which were planted by the Apostles. The sacred historian gives a particular account of the gathering of the Church at Ephesus by the preaching of Paul, in the nineteenth chapter of the Acts. When Paul arrived at that place, he found about twelve dis-

* Acts viii. 36, 37, 38.
† Verse 39.
‡ Acts xvi. 14.
‖ Verse 40.
§ Verses 30—35.
¶ Acts xviii. 8.
** 1 Cor. i. 14, 16.
†† 1 Cor. xvi. 15.
‡‡ Matt. xxviii. 19.
‖‖ Mark xvi. 15, 16.
§§ Matt. xxviii. 20.

ciples, who knew only the baptism of John. These persons having heard John, or some of his disciples, saying unto them, "That they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus," had already been baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus.* After Paul had preached the Gospel in the Jewish synagogue at Ephesus, and "when divers were hardened, and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples"† from the unbelieving Jews, forming them into a distinct society as a church of Christ; turning at the same time also to the Gentiles, to whom he preached the Gospel when it was rejected by the Jews. A very remarkable account is given of the effects produced by the Word of God. "Many that believed came, and confessed, and showed their deeds. Many of them also which used curious arts, brought their books together, and burned them before all men: and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver. So mightily grew the Word of God and prevailed." ‡ This is the beginning of the church of God at Ephesus, to the elders of which the same Apostle afterwards says, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." ‖ You see, therefore, that a society which the Lord acknowledges as a church of Christ, consists of persons whom God hath purchased with his own blood. In the epistle written by Paul to this church, he denominates them, in distinction from the people in general who dwelt there, "the saints which are at Ephesus;" § affirms, that they trusted in Christ after they heard the Word of truth, the Gospel of their salvation; in whom also, says he, "after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise;" ¶ and represents them as having been dead in sins, but now quickened together with Christ, partakers of the riches of Divine mercy, saved by grace, and created in Christ Jesus unto good works. ** They were formerly "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise;" but now they were made nigh by the blood of Christ, reconciled to God by his cross, fellow-citizens with the saints, and builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.††

A similar description is given of all the churches in the New Testament, on which we need not enlarge. The Romans

* Acts xix. 3, 4, 5. † Ver. 8, 9. ‡ Ver. 18—20. ‖ Acts xx. 28.
§ Eph. i. 1. ¶ Ver. 13. ** Eph. ii. 1, 5, 7, 8, 10.
†† Eph. ii. 12, 13, 16, 19, 22.

are characterised as "beloved of God, called to be saints;"* the Corinthians, as "sanctified in Christ Jesus, and called by God the Father to the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord;" † the Colossians, as "saints and faithful brethren in Christ;" ‡ and the Christians at Thessalonica, as "the church of the Thessalonians which was in God the Father, and in our Lord Jesus Christ." ‖ This was not a vague judgment of charity, pronounced without any proper evidence: the Apostle "knew their election of God," by the effects which the Gospel produced upon them; for he says, "our Gospel came not to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake. And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost," § And he expresses his confidence with respect to the whole church at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons, "that he who had begun a good work in them, would perform it until the day of Jesus Christ;" for he adds, "even as it is meet for me to think this of *you all*, because I have you in my heart; inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defence and comfirmation of the Gospel, *ye all* are partakers of my grace. For God is my record, how greatly I long after *you all* in the bowels of Jesus Christ. ¶

There were indeed many things opposite to the genuine influence of the Gospel in *some* of those churches to which epistles were sent by the Apostles of Christ, and in five of the seven churches in Asia, which our Lord himself immediately addressed; such as envying, strife, and divisions, disrespect to the poor, over-reaching one another in their dealings, eating things sacrificed to idols, and even immoralities of the grossest kind, as well as dangerous errors respecting the faith. ** In short, there is scarcely any evil that prevails in the world, of which you will not find instances in one or other of these churches. This is admitting all that can be charged against them by the greatest enemies of that purity of communion, which after all, I am confident, was strictly enjoined on the first churches, and, upon the whole, exemplified in their conduct.

The wickedness that was committed by individual members among them, and the lukewarmness and other symptoms of apostasy that too generally prevailed in some of these churches, are surely not recorded for our imitation. Did the Apostles of Christ approve of these things? Did they tolerate them, or

* Rom. i. 7. † 1 Cor. i. 2. ‡ Col. i. 2.
‖ 1 Thess. i. 1. § Verses 4—6. ¶ Phil. i. 1, 6, 7. 8.
** Epistles to the Corinthians and Galatians. Also Rev. ii. and iii.

give the churches permission to do so? Were they not, on the contrary, often employed in reproving and admonishing those who had sinned, calling them to repentance, and assuring them that they who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Did not Paul solemnly command the Corinthians, to put away from among themselves a wicked person,* and express his fear that his God would humble him among them, and that he should bewail many who had sinned and had not repented;† which implies that they also would be excommunicated if they did not repent? He likewise says to the Galatians, with respect to the corrupters of the Gospel doctrine among them, "I would they were even cut off which trouble you;"‡ and this is the rule which ought to regulate the procedure of churches in dealing with all such persons, "A man that is an heretic, after the first and second admonition, *reject;* knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself."‖ Not only the persons who committed sin, but the churches which did not purge out this old leaven, were highly blamed for their remissness in discipline, as appears from Paul's complaints against the church at Corinth, on account of their retaining a wicked person in their communion; from the deep distress in which his first letter involved the Church; and from the zeal, repentance, and indignation which it occasioned.§ The same thing also will be discerned by every attentive reader, in our Lord's method of addressing the churches in Asia. He commends one of them, because she could not bear them which were evil: and had tried them who said they were Apostles, and were not, and had found them liars;¶ and he condemns several others for having among them those who committed iniquity.

Churches, such as those which were planted by the Apostles, are reclaimable when they go astray. The Word of God has access to their hearts, and when it is brought home to their consciences, they will fall before its power, and glorify God, by confessing and forsaking their iniquity, as we see the church at Corinth did on that occasion which has been already mentioned. This is one of the most genuine marks of true Christianity; for in this imperfect state Christians themselves are subject to many departures from the living God; they have often occasion to repent; and, when they confess their sins, God is faithful and just to forgive them their sins, and to cleanse them from all unrighteousness.** The disciples of Christ ought

* 1 Cor. v. † 2 Cor. xii. 21. ‡ Gal. v. 12.
‖ Titus iii. 10, 11. § 2 Cor. vii. 8—13. ¶ Rev. ii. 2.
** 1 John i. 9.

not therefore to be too precipitate in leaving the fellowship of a church, if it can in any respect be justly considered as a church of Christ, though there be many evils in it. It is their duty to use every mean that is appointed in the Word of God for remedying these evils, and to imitate the long-suffering of God in their conduct towards their brethren. Thus far, we may improve from what is said in the New Testament concerning the corruptions of the first churches.

But what has all this to do with religious societies, which consist principally of worldly men professing Christianity, who never felt the power of the Gospel, who are taught solely by education and custom to attend to *any* religious forms, who have scarcely a shadow of discipline among them of any kind, and none of that which the Word of God inculcates, and who would smile at the feeble attempts of those who might wish to establish purity of communion?† Is there any possibility of reforming such churches? Might you not with as great propriety talk of reforming the world? It does not appear from any thing, either in the history of the first churches contained in the New Testament, or in the promises respecting future times, that God himself intends to reform them, in any other way than by demolishing them altogether. It is opposite to every idea of a church of Christ that can be gathered from the New Testament, to suppose that a society in which there is no discrimination between the people of God and the world, can deserve to be so named. On the contrary, it is easy to discern in this particular, the influence of "that *Antichrist* which you have heard should come," and now for a long time has been in the world—that monstrous power which, under a profession of subjection to Christ, has trampled on many of his laws, opened the floodgates of corruption, and spoiled the simplicity and glory of the primitive churches. Even those churches which in the days of the Apostles were the temples of the living God, became at last so corrupt, that he who walks in the midst of the golden candlesticks, and holds the stars in his right hand,* entirely disowned and forsook them, according to his threatening, when he said, I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent."† It was the duty of all the true fearers of God to separate from these churches whenever they became totally incorrigible, and in their united capacity refused subjection to the laws of the King of Zion; for at this awful period, God himself withdrew from their assemblies. And it was always unquestionably the duty of such to turn away from those corrupt societies of nominal Chris-

* Rev. i. 13, 16, and ii. 1. † Rev. iii. 16, and ii. 5.

tians, which have been gathered by the influence of the *Man of Sin*, and never ought to have been considered as the dwelling-places of the Most High.

Fifth, It is evident, from the nature and design of Gospel ordinances, that believers of the truth alone ought to partake of them; and not only those who may be considered as unworthy communicants, but all who join with them, are guilty of a high profanation of these ordinances. Baptism signifies the remission of sins through the blood of Christ.* It represents the death, burial, and resurrection of the Son of God, and is an outward sign or token to them who believe, of their fellowship with Christ in his death, who bore their sins in his own body on the tree; and in his resurrection, who is become the first-fruits of them that sleep, and will raise up all his people to the enjoyment of eternal life.† It signifies also our being dead unto sin, and alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord; and points out to us the necessity of walking in newness of life, as those who have obtained mercy.‡ But to any person, whether an infant or an adult, who has no enjoyment of remission, no fellowship with Christ in his death, no hope of life eternal through his resurrection from the dead, and who has no experience of a new and spiritual life in Christ Jesus; of what avail is baptism? It is in one view a mere unmeaning ceremony. All that can be seen in it is "the putting away of the filth of the flesh," when the person baptised has not "the answer of a good conscience towards God, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ;" ‖ and in another view, it is debasing and prostituting a solemn ordinance of the Gospel.

The same thing may be observed with respect to the Lord's Supper. The bread and wine signify the body of Christ broken for his own people, and his blood shed for the remission of their sins. In this ordinance, they remember with grateful hearts the death of the Lord Jesus, and show it forth as the foundation of all their hope until he come again.§ But what is the Lord's Supper to thousands of professing Christians, who never think of Christ at all, who have no conviction of their need of salvation by him, no enjoyment of peace with God through his atonement, nor any joyful hope in the prospect of his second coming? It is not, when such partake of it, an innocent unmeaning form. They eat and drink judgment to themselves, not discerning the Lord's body. They are guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.¶ If there is any

* Mark i. 4. Acts ii. 38, and xxii. 16. † Rom. vi. 3—5. Col. ii. 12.
‡ Rom. vi. 4, to the end. Col. ii. 11, 13. Tit. iii. 5. ‖ 1 Pet. iii. 21.
§ Luke xxii. 19, 20. 1 Cor. xi. 23—27. ¶ 1 Cor. xi. 27, 29.

such thing enjoined in the New Testament as purity of communion, if brethren in a church are commanded to watch over one another, to bring offenders to repentance, or to purge them out as old leaven that they may be a new lump, (since even Christ their passover is sacrificed for them;) surely none of those can be guiltless who in any respect join in this profanation of the ordinances of the Lord. More indeed might be said in the present case; for these admonitions are given to *a church of Christ* which had fallen into a disorderly way of eating the Lord's Supper, on which account many of them were chastened of the Lord, that they should not be condemned with the world.* But how much greater is the evil when *the world themselves* are employed in the outward observance of this ordinance, while they are entirely ignorant of its nature, and have no enjoyment of what is signified in it?

We must not be told, as an excuse for joining in Christ's ordinances with men who have no just pretensions to the fear of God, that many of the Jews under the former dispensation were unbelievers with respect to the spiritual promise made to their fathers, and that all of them were in a great measure ignorant of what was signified by the ordinances that were then of Divine institution, while nevertheless they were bound to observe them. It is recorded of them, that they could not steadfastly look to the end of that which was to be abolished.† This unfolding of mysteries was reserved for the coming of the Messiah, and there is a contrast in this respect between the Old and the New Testament dispensation. Carnal worshippers will not now be accepted; for "God is a spirit, and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth."‡ We must not go back to that covenant which has decayed, waxed old, and vanished away;‖ nor turn again to its weak and beggarly elements, which would bring us into bondage.§

Sixth, There are several express commandments, besides the injunction in the text, obliging the people of God to have no religious fellowship with unbelievers, whether they are Jews, idolatrous Gentiles, or antichristian professors.

Believing Jews were permitted for a time to worship in the synagogues, and in the temple, and to observe the law of Moses; which, being a Divine institution, they could obey it without sinning till it was set aside by express Divine revelation. This accounts for the mixture of believing and unbelieving Jews in their peculiar worship, while only the former had communion with the churches of Christ. The complete abrogation of the old

* 1 Cor. xi. 20—22, 30—32. † 2 Cor. iii. 13. ‡ John iv. 23, 24.
‖ Heb. viii. 13. § Gal. iv. 9.

covenant, and all that pertained to it, does not seem to have been clearly revealed till the Epistle to the Hebrews was written; and it was not actually accomplished till Jerusalem was destroyed. But when this revelation was given, Jewish Christians were separated entirely from their connexion with carnal worshippers. They were to "go without the camp" of Israel, as Jesus "suffered without the gate" of Jerusalem, "bearing his reproach," and remembering that they had here no continuing city, and sought one to come.* This obliged them to drop all their former prejudices, and to forsake entirely the carnal ordinances of Moses.

Both Jewish and Gentile Christians were strictly prohibited from having any connexion with the idolatrous worship of the heathen, and from joining in Christian fellowship with unbelievers. On this subject, the Apostle thus addresses the church at Corinth, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore, come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."† The arguments here used by the Apostle, conclude equally against those whom he denominates the temple of the living God, worshipping in heathen temples, and admitting unbelievers to have fellowship with them. He shows, in a most irresistible manner, the glaring inconsistency of such conduct. To maintain that there is any propriety in believers having fellowship with unbelievers is equally absurd, as it would be to affirm that righteousness may have fellowship with unrighteousness, that light may have communion with darkness, and that no irreconcilable discord subsists between Christ and Belial, or between the temple of God and idols. The highest encouragement also is given to come out from among them, and be separate, and to avoid even touching the unclean thing; for in obeying this, the Lord promises to dwell among his people, and to manifest himself to them as their God and Father. But you will say, these were Pagan idolaters. I am not, however, disposed to consider them as more criminal in the

* Heb. xiii. 12—14. † 2 Cor. vi. 14, to the end.

sight of God, than men who take up an empty profession of the name of Christ, and commit the same wickedness as they do. You will see a remarkable similarity between many of the characters ascribed to the heathen in Rom. i. 29—31, and those mentioned in the text as belonging to persons who have a form of godliness. The guilt of the latter is aggravated beyond that of the former, by their abuse of the superior privileges which they enjoy; and the danger arising from them to the disciples of Christ is unquestionably greater.

There are, however, other commandments of the Lord, which apply directly to the connexion of believers of the truth with false professors. The Apostle had *them only* in view, when he said, "from such turn away;" and a more plain or express injunction than this, with respect to any duty, cannot be found in all the Word of God. In relation to some of those false teachers and deceivers, who had then begun at Rome to subvert the doctrine of the kingdom of heaven, having their own temporal interest in view while they professed to serve Christ, the Apostle says to the believing Romans, "Now, I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and *avoid them*. For they serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple." * There were also, in other places besides Rome, men who taught things opposite to the genuine influence of the truth; who consented not "to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness;" and were "proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness:" *from such* Timothy is expressly commanded to *withdraw himself*. †

I will not mention as an authority for turning away from unbelievers, the commandment to the Thessalonians to note that man who walked disorderly, not working, but going about as a busy body, and to have no company with him, that he might be ashamed; for this relates to the case of a Christian brother, who, from an indolent disposition, or from mistaken views of religion, may idle away too much of his time. We must not give any countenance to this practice, which is hurtful both to soul and body; and the best way to make a man ashamed of such conduct, is to keep no company with him,—that is, to allow him to spend none of that time with us which we know might

* Rom. xvi. 17, 18. † 1 Tim. vi. 3—5.

be better employed; or, in other words, to admonish him, and send him to his work: for the Apostle adds, "Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother." *

But there is another commandment which is exactly in point. I shall give it you in the words of the Apostle John. "And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues; for her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities." † That society from which the people of God are thus mercifully called by a voice from heaven, is Babylon, or the false church, whose iniquities are so multiplied and various, that time would fail me to recount them. She pretends to be the spouse of Christ, but is in reality a prostitute, committing fornication with the kings of the earth, and making the inhabitants of the earth drunk with the wine of her fornication. ‡ She has corrupted the Gospel, and profaned its ordinances. She has long kept the people of God in bondage, enslaving their souls by the influence of human authority. She is full of abomination and filthiness; every thing that is hateful to God is found in her; and awful indeed will be that destruction which shall come upon her, for it is "the vengeance of the Lord, the vengeance of his temple." ‖ There are many disputes about what class of people is meant by this Babylon, though all parties might easily discern that a wicked society, falsely claiming the character of the Church of Christ, is intended. Protestants generally apply the description that is given of her, solely to the church of Rome; while Catholics most absurdly endeavour to show, that the wicked power described in Rev. xvii., is Rome heathen. I will not at present enter into a full discussion of this subject. But keeping to the point in hand, I affirm, on the authority of the Word of God, that wherever you see an assembly of men professing godliness, attending outwardly to the ordinances of the Gospel, while their conduct proves them to be destitute of true religion, there you see the false church: which, if it is not Babylon the great, the *mother* of harlots, is without all peradventure one of her *daughters*. And it does not alter the case, if we should find among them some of the real children of God; for they would not be called to come out of Babylon, if they were not there. It is of great importance to discern, in a just point of view, the dreadful iniquity of a corrupt profession of Christianity: and this is undoubtedly one leading part of it. What else could have raised

* 2 Thess. iii. 6. 15.
† Rev. xviii. 4, 5.
‡ Rev. xvii. 1, 2.
‖ Jer. li. 11.

the Man of Sin to his impious throne, and armed him with that tyrannical power which he has long exercised over the souls and bodies of men? By what other method shall we account for *whole nations* assuming a form of godliness without the power of it, if we do not admit that the influence of the Man of Sin gradually extended this unscriptural and spurious profession of Christianity, till at last it spread universally over the whole of Europe? And since it cannot be denied that the same evil continues in many Protestant churches which are reformed from the gross idolatry and superstition of the church of Rome, is there any want of candour, or of charity, in judging them on this account to be *antichristian?* There is not a more certain and decisive mark of antichrist in all the Word of God, than an outward form of Christianity in connexion with every thing that is opposite to its genuine spirit. This is an essential part of his character, and is easily discernible in almost all that is said of him in the prophetic Scriptures. This call from heaven, therefore, makes it the bounden duty of the people of God to come out of every religious society in which ungodly men partake of the solemn ordinances of the Gospel. They are called to this, in the foresight of that destruction which is coming upon Babylon. They cannot avoid a participation of her guilt, while they do not "flee out of the midst of Babylon, and deliver every man his soul;"* for the voice says, "Come out of her, my people, *that ye be not partakers of her sins:*" as they are in the utmost danger of "receiving of her plagues."

* Jer. li. 6. Rev. xviii. 4.

DISCOURSE III.

"This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come: For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away."—2 Tim. iii. 1—5.

In the last discourse, I endeavoured to illustrate and enforce the duty of separation from the world in religious fellowship. We may now attend to another observation, which is intimately connected with this subject.

The disciples of Christ are not only bound to turn away from antichristian societies, but to be closely united to one another in the bonds of Christian love; and, in their joint capacity as churches, to observe all the institutions of the kingdom of heaven. The persons who were converted by the preaching of the Apostles, were immediately baptised, and, if possible from their local situation, added to the churches. In places where they had only just begun to preach the Gospel, those who believed it met together, and observed all the ordinances to which in this situation they could attend; and whenever men appeared among them properly qualified for the work of the ministry, they were organized, or set in order, as churches of the Lord Jesus Christ;* and "continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." All this you will see from the instance already mentioned of the church at Jerusalem, and from the whole inspired history of the first churches, in the Acts and Apostolic Epistles.†

The ordinances which are observed in a church or congregation of Jesus Christ, are necessary for the edification of the

* Acts xiv. 23. Tit. i. 5. † Acts ii. 42. Col. ii. 5. 1 Cor. xi. 2.

disciples, to put them in remembrance of the truth by which they are saved, to increase their faith, to strengthen their hope, to excite their love and obedience. In these they enjoy communion with God, a sense of his love shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Spirit, and an anticipation of that unspeakable joy which they shall at last obtain in his immediate presence. For Christ says, "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him;" * and God hath promised to dwell among them, and walk among them: I will be "a father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." † The disciples of Christ who mutually enjoy these high privileges, will not assume any haughtiness of appearance, or gratify themselves with the pride of worldly distinctions. They are connected together as brethren, in the family of their God and Father, and are all one in Christ Jesus. There is one body, and one spirit, even as they are called in one hope of their calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in them all. ‡ On these accounts, they are besought to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love, endeavouring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. ‖ They treat one another as near and intimate friends, who are deeply concerned in each other's welfare. They rejoice with them that rejoice, and weep with them that weep; § accounting it pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep themselves unspotted from the world. ¶ They strengthen, edify, and comfort one another in every situation, with the words of eternal life; ** and they show their concern for those in poor and afflicted circumstances, not by mere words of sympathy, but by contributing to their relief as God hath prospered them. †† By thus abounding in the work of faith, and labour of love to the name of Jesus, they "provoke one another to love and to good works;" while they are also established in the faith, and excited to every Christian duty, by not forsaking the assembling of themselves together, but exhorting one another; and so much the more as they see the day approaching. ‡‡ They warn and admonish those who are apparently in danger of going astray; ‖‖

* John xiv. 21. † 2 Cor. vi. 16, 18. ‡ Gal. iii. 28. Eph. iv. 4—6.
‖ Eph. iv. 1—3. § Rom. xii. 15. ¶ James i. 27.
** Rom. xv. 14. Eph. iv. 15. Col. iii. 16. 1 Thess. iv. 18, and v. 11.
†† 1 Tim. vi. 17—19. Heb. xiii. 16. James ii. 15, 16. 1 John iii. 17.
‡‡ Heb. x. 24, 25. ‖‖ 1 Thess. v. 14. Heb iii. 13. Jude, ver. 22, 23.

and if any of them should be guilty of an evident breach of the law of Christ, they use, in the spirit of love and meekness, all those means which he hath appointed for bringing offenders to repentance.* In some cases, this may issue in the exclusion of an impenitent sinner from the fellowship of a church; but even this is done from love to his soul: it is intended "for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus."†

If such are the advantages that may be enjoyed in this connexion, and if several of the commandments that have been mentioned cannot be obeyed except in churches, which is so evident that it requires no argument to prove it; are not those who have forsaken Babylon, without finding their way to the dwelling-places of Mount Zion, very much wanting to themselves? And must they not be conscious of living in the neglect of a great part of that duty which they owe to their Lord and Saviour?

III. I now proceed to make a few remarks on the extent of the duty enjoined in the text, and on the consequences resulting from the faithful performance of it.

First, The law of Christ does not make such a complete separation between his disciples and the world, as to prevent hypocrites and self-deceivers from getting into the purest churches. There was a traitor among the twelve Apostles of Christ, who sold himself to commit the greatest of all crimes. As I have hinted at the case of Judas, allow me to remark, that his being present or not at the celebration of the Lord's Supper, does not affect the question we are now considering. I am inclined to think, from its being said by the Evangelist John, that he, after "having received the sop, went immediately out,"‡ that he was not present when our Lord gave the bread and the cup to his disciples; for it is perfectly clear that the sop was given at the Passover Supper, which preceded the institution of the Lord's Supper. None of the other Evangelists indeed take notice of this circumstance, and one of them narrates the whole transaction in such a way, as would naturally lead us to conclude that Judas was there. But they do not affirm this; and we frequently meet with a narration of historical facts in the Scripture, not in the exact order in which they happened. This appears evidently to have been done by Luke in the present case; for he mentions first the Lord's Supper, and then the giving of the sop to Judas, whereas

* Matt. xviii. 15—17. † 1 Cor. v. 5. ‡ John xiii. 30.

Matthew and Mark both begin with the latter.* These three Evangelists do not narrate any circumstance inconsistent with Judas going away immediately on his being pointed out as the traitor, and before the institution of the Lord's Supper, though they omit this particular; and as John expressly affirms it, why may we not conclude, that the first society who partook of this ordinance, with the Lord himself in the midst of them, consisted only of his chosen friends and faithful followers; and that he purposely detected Judas, and put him away, that none else might be present on that solemn occasion? But if any think otherwise, let them remember that Judas was till then an unsuspected disciple of the Lord Jesus; for when he said, "One of you shall betray me," the suspicion did not fall upon Judas; each one of them said, "Lord, is it I?"† The kind of intimation given them respecting Judas, they did not then understand; for when Jesus said to him, "That thou doest, do quickly—no man at the table knew for what intent he spake this unto him."‡ Supposing, therefore, that Judas had communion with them in this ordinance, it was not as a known hypocrite, but as a disciple of Jesus, whom they loved for the truth's sake.

Many other instances of the same kind might be mentioned. Two persons in the church at Jerusalem, Annanias and his wife Sapphira, at a time when the disciples there were peculiarly filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit, were guilty of an aggravated instance of dissimulation, which brought upon them the instant vengeance of Almighty God.‖ Simon Magus, soon after his being baptised on the profession of his faith, manifested himself to be "in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity."§ And many persons in the first churches, some by their wicked conduct, and others by their apostasy from the faith, gave evidence that they had never known the grace of God in truth. But every one of them had originally professed to repent and believe the Gospel, and for a time seemed to walk under its influence. This is all that we can require, if we act in conformity to the commandments of Jesus Christ, and the example of his Apostles. God alone can judge the heart, and we have nothing to regulate our judgment but the confession of the mouth, and a conduct and conversation suitable to the holy profession of the name of Christ. Tares which resemble the wheat must not be prematurely gathered up, lest "we root up also the wheat with them."¶ The distinction

* Luke xxii. 19—23. Matt. xxvi. 21—30. Mark xiv. 18—26.
† Matt. xxvi. 22. ‡ John xiii. 27, 28. ‖ Acts v. 1—11.
§ Acts viii. 18—24. ¶ Matt. xiii. 29.

therefore which takes place in the *visible* kingdom of God in this world, is not between *real* believers and those who only *appear* to be such; but between *the latter* and those who, either by an unsound profession of the faith, or by their want of subjection to the laws of Christ, *do not appear* to be real believers of the Gospel. If we properly understand the evidences of faith in Christ, and admit that no man ought to be reckoned a Christian till he make a Scriptural profession of the faith, and be taught by the grace of God "to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world," * we will not be apt to err in this particular. The whole discipline of the churches ought to be regulated by the principle that has just been mentioned. They cannot by any possible means keep themselves free of hypocrites; but they may avoid connexion with all those whom Christians, judging according to the Word of God, can discern to be so.

Second, The law of Christ, however, makes a complete separation in this respect between true professors of the faith, and those who have nothing but the name and form. Every one who has duly considered the doctrine of the New Testament on this subject, must be convinced, that Christians ought not to have fellowship *in the Lord's Supper* with visible unbelievers, or such as are easily perceived by those who follow the Scriptural rule of judging, to be destitute of true Christianity; though many, alas! who have this conviction, find a variety of excuses for acting in opposition to it.

But Christian communion does not consist merely in a joint participation of the Lord's Supper. Believers of the Gospel have also fellowship with one another in the ordinances of prayer and praise, which always accompany the preaching of the Word. Is it not therefore highly necessary, that such as enjoy the unspeakable privilege of drawing near to God in prayer and thanksgiving, through the atonement of Christ, should consider what sort of societies they are, with which they join in these ordinances of Divine worship? Where there is no distinction between those who are, and those who are not accepted of God in prayer; do not the disciples of Christ who worship in such assemblies, join with unbelievers in that service of the living God, which is peculiar to his own people? Not that I would plead for excluding men of any description whatever, from the worshipping assemblies of the people of God. All are welcome to hear the glad tidings of salvation in the churches of Christ, and to witness the observance of every

* Tit. ii. 11, 12.

institution of his kingdom. But it ought to be manifest that there is a distinction made between the church and the world, that some select number of the persons present are accounted members of it, and that none have communion with it but those who "keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus."* I am fully persuaded that the disciples of Christ ought not to give countenance to religious societies of any other description, nor to join in any part of their worship. All the Scriptures that have been brought to prove the obligation of Christians to have no fellowship with unbelievers, evidently carry to this extent their separation from worldly men, and false professors of the faith.†

Third, It is by no means the intention of any one thing that is affirmed, enjoined, or exemplified in the New Testament concerning purity of communion, to separate the people of God from one another. The persons from whom the text obliges us to "turn away," are those alone who "have a form of godliness, but deny the power thereof;" those who dishonour the Christian profession by a course of conduct altogether opposite to its purity, or who are mere nominal professors of the Christian faith. The commandments which regulate the conduct of believers of the truth in relation to one another, run uniformly in this strain, "Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children, and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us."‡ "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment."‖ "If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfil ye my joy, that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind."§ This unity was predicted by the prophet Jeremiah, "I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me for ever."¶ Ezekiel connects the same promise with the regenerating influences of the Spirit of God, "I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you, and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh; that they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them."** And Isaiah, when announcing, in animated and joyful terms, the future publication of the Gospel of peace, and referring to that period, says, "Thy watchmen shall lift

* Rev. xiv. 12. † 2 Cor. vi. 14, 17 ‡ Eph. v. 1, 2.
‖ 1 Cor. i. 10. § Phil. ii. 1—6. ¶ Jer. xxxii. 39.
** Ezek. xi. 19, 20.

up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing: for they shall see eye to eye, when the Lord shall bring again Zion." * Jesus prayed, not only that a real invisible unity might subsist among all his disciples, but that it might appear to the world for their conviction. "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also who shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." † This unity was exemplified in the church at Jerusalem, for the whole multitude of the disciples there "were of one heart and of one soul." ‡ It prevailed also in several of the other primitive churches; and when any thing opposite to this appeared among them—when they were either divided in affection or in their sentiments respecting the truth itself, and the conduct to which it leads—they were severely censured by the Apostles of Christ. ‖ Far be it from me, therefore, to say any thing that would have the smallest tendency to disturb that unity of heart and affection, or of faith and practice, which ought to subsist among "all who in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord."

I know, however, that it will be said (with what justice will appear from a candid state of the argument on both sides) that the direct tendency of all that I have insisted for, is to make schisms and divisions, to alienate the affections of the people of God from one another, and to crumble them into a variety of sects and parties. I shall probably be stigmatized as a leader of one of these parties, an enemy to Catholic charity, and totally destitute of those liberal and enlarged sentiments, which distinguish the true spirit of Christianity from party prejudices, enthusiastic zeal, and ignorant bigotry. These accusations are founded on the supposed impropriety of calling the people of God to forsake religious societies, in which it is confessed there are many unbelievers, because in so doing they would separate from one another; and on the examples that are every where to be seen of numberless sectaries, formed by those who have dissented from the religion of their country.

It must be confessed that, in obeying the call of God to turn away from those who have a form of godliness but deny the power thereof, we separate not only from persons of this description, but from all the people of God who remain in connexion with them: unless we should homologate the irrational conceit of some, who gravely affirm, while they are in full

* Isaiah lii. 7, 8. † John xvii. 20—24. ‡ Acts iv. 32.
‖ 1 Cor. i. 11—13; iii. 1—10; iv. 6—8; and xi. 16—23. 2 Cor. xii. 20, 21. Gal. v. 15. James iii. 1, 13, to the end.

communion with persons of all descriptions, that they have no *Christian fellowship* except with true believers of the Gospel. For if they have a real though invisible fellowship with all the children of God in heaven and on earth, so have we also. We "are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God." * We "are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven." † But I speak of *outward visible fellowship*, and this communion we certainly have with all our fellow-worshippers in the congregation to which we belong, while we have it not with those from whom we have separated.

After this avowal, some will perhaps expect a fair acknowledgement, that we who have turned away from antichristian societies, have no desire to be connected with such of the disciples of Christ as we have left behind us; and that we entertain as great an aversion to them, as to the heterogeneous bodies of professing Christians of which they are members. This is by no means the case. We have nothing in view but to obey the commandments of Jesus Christ. We have made no schism *in the church of God*, by leaving those societies which are as full of envy, strife, and division, as any other political bodies of worldly men; and which, for these and other reasons formerly mentioned, we do not consider as Christian churches. If the Word of God commands us to turn aside from false professors of Christianity, ought we to disobey this precept, because some of the genuine disciples of Christ are among them? Will their disobedience, proceeding in many cases from ignorance of their duty, excuse ours, which would be an open violation of what we certainly know to be the law of Christ? ‡ Or is it proper that our attachment to such persons, however well founded, should lead us to disregard the authority of God, and to act in opposition to his revealed will? ‖

It is true, the things in which we differ from *real Christians* of other denominations, are not in every view essential to salvation, otherwise we could not admit the possibility of their being real Christians; but it is essential to the character of those who fear God, *that they should conscientiously obey whatever they know to be his will.* I cannot reconcile this principle with such a coalition of all parties as has been of late earnestly recommended, and in some degree exemplified, otherwise than

* Eph. ii. 19. † Heb. xii. 22, 23. ‡ Luke xii. 47, 48.
‖ Psal. xiv. 10. Matt. x. 37—39. Gal. ii. 11.

by supposing that these parties have no real conscientious objection against one another's principles or practices; and particularly, that they are all agreed about the lawfulness of believers having fellowship with unbelievers.* If they are not thus agreed, how can they follow a practice opposite to their own conviction of what is their indispensable duty by the Word of God? Is it because they reckon this a matter of small importance? I should rather think it ought to be considered as one of the great and weightier matters of Christ's law. But in whatever light this or any other of the Divine commandments may be viewed, with respect to their comparative importance, and whatever allowance it may be necessary to make for those who ignorantly disobey them, we dare not suppose that any who know them, can neglect *the least of them* with impunity. All the peculiar laws of Christ's kingdom are reckoned of little or no consequence by multitudes of professing Christians; and those who plead *on this account* against subjection to any one of them, evidently resist his authority.† What would you think of a man who, on being hard pressed about some duties plainly enjoined on the followers of Christ, should argue in this manner against them?—These things, I must own, are commandments of Jesus Christ, but they are not the essentials of true religion; many have obtained salva-

* No reflection is intended against that which has lately occasioned a junction of different parties, for the purpose of propagating the Gospel among the heathen nations, whether these are in a state of rudeness and barbarity, or of civilisation and refinement; this will certainly be approved by every one, who knows the infinite importance of salvation from the wrath to come. The unanimity, zeal, and generous exertions, which have appeared in this benevolent work, are highly commendable. Nor do I censure those who seem willing to put an end to the unmeaning distinctions which formerly kept them at a distance from other parties. Love is amiable in all its forms; and when it proceeds in any respect on Christian principles, it must be gratifying to all the lovers of Christ. My only design is, to show the evil of real Christians joining with any religious party which does not attend to divine ordinances in a state of separation from the world. If their own party is of this kind, they are as much to blame for remaining in connexion with it, as they can be for having fellowship with any other. It is my own opinion, that this is the precise footing on which the matter stands, and that, whatever diversity of sentiment there may be among the individuals of whom the uniting parties are composed, there is in fact no material difference among them, considered as bodies, or distinct classes of professing Christians. Some of themselves, however, think otherwise; and, if it is their opinion that their own communion is pure, and that it ought to be so, it remains with them to free themselves from the inconsistency of giving countenance to other parties which have no such pretension. With persons of the former class, I argue on their own principles. Those of the latter, though in some respects more to blame, are yet more consistent with themselves.

† Matt. v. 19. James ii. 10.

tion without knowing or obeying them; and they appear to me so trifling and unimportant, that I am resolved to live in the total neglect of them. Yet arguments of this kind, if it is proper to call them arguments, by which the wisdom of Christ is impeached, and his authority set at nought, are too frequently used by serious professors of religion, though they may not always speak so plainly. And it is chiefly because we refuse to tamper in this manner with the authority of the King of Zion, that we are reckoned obstinate, illiberal, and schismatical.

Further, it is the duty of all who believe the Gospel, to hearken to that commandment of God which calls them out of antichristian societies. And if it were universally regarded by all those persons to whom it is addressed, separation from the world in religious fellowship would not appear, as in fact it is not in its own nature, a measure which has any tendency to separate the people of God from one another. On the contrary, they never can be properly united, nor "stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel," and in nothing terrified by their adversaries,* till they are separated from all strangers,† and builded together in churches "as an habitation of God through the Spirit."‡ There is not any thing that I know, which so entirely defaces the visible unity of Christ's disciples, as the indiscriminate mixture of believers with unbelievers in the observance of Gospel ordinances: nor was it possible for Antichrist himself, to have devised a more effectual way of preventing their real unity in heart and affection, their edification in the faith, and their conformity to the Son of God.

Could our accusers justly blame us, if we should now turn the challenge against them, and say, It is *you* that divide the people of God, by joining in religious fellowship with worldly men, and refusing to become visibly one with the despised followers of Jesus, who, amidst a great deal of sin and imperfection, wish to pay a sacred regard to all his precepts. While you remain in your present situation, you unconsciously second the efforts of the Man of Sin, to obliterate that grand distinction between the people of God and the world, which shines as a sunbeam throughout the whole of the New Testament; and to darken the minds of men, with respect to the nature of true Christianity. Before you and we can be members of the same visible church, either you must yield obedience to the Word of God, or we must act in direct opposition to it, with regard to what it prescribes concerning the rule of Christian communion.

* Phil. i. 27, 28. † Neh. ix. 2. ‡ Eph. ii. 22.

This alternative imposes no hardship on you, for it requires nothing of you that is not demanded by the law of Christ, whom you profess to serve. But what an intolerable burden does it lay upon us! Is it your own opinion, that we would act conscientiously in submitting to it? Surely not. Judge then on which side the guilt of this separation lies.

It is undeniably true, also, that among those who have separated from national churches, there are a vast variety of parties; some of which are not a great deal more scrupulous about the purity of their communion than in national churches, while others of them hold the most dangerous errors respecting the faith; denying the doctrine of the Scriptures concerning the person and atonement of the Son of God, and almost every thing that is important in the Gospel. It would be a matter of great joy to all who wish the prosperity of the Redeemer's kingdom, if there were no divisions among the people of God, and that the only distinction among mankind were *they who are of God*, and they who are of this world. But will any serious Christian venture to affirm, that the great diversity of opinion and practice which obtains among various classes of Dissenters, is the necessary consequence of withdrawing, if they have withdrawn, from fellowship with unbelievers? Surely obedience to an express commandment of the Lord Jesus Christ, cannot be the means of scattering and dividing his sheep; for all his laws as well as his doctrine, have a tendency directly opposite. A due attention to this law produced the most salutary consequences in the primitive churches; many of the evils which took place among them arose from the neglect of it; and the same causes will infallibly at this day produce the same effects. The corruption of human nature, the temptations of Satan, and the influence of the Man of Sin, who has disciples even among those who have separated from national churches, are sufficient to account for all the divisions and animosities that prevail amongst professing Christians.

The question then must necessarily come to this issue. By which party is the rule of the Word of God strictly and conscientiously regarded? Do you see any congregations of Christians, professing the genuine faith of the Gospel, and following the approved example of the churches that were planted by the Apostles of Christ? Of them only it can be justly affirmed, that they avoid all such measures as are truly schismatical, and *fully appear* to belong to that great and honourable party, THE WHOLE FAMILY OF GOD IN HEAVEN AND EARTH.* For

* Eph. iii. 15.

though the order of churches, and a scrupulous attention to all the positive laws of Christ, which have nothing to recommend them but his authority, do not constitute the *essentials* of true religion; yet they form a considerable part of the *evidence* of genuine Christianity, or that which distinguishes the followers of Christ from the world. Every person indeed, who is not self-condemned with respect to his religious fellowship, will be partial to his own party, and reckon it superior to any other. But notwithstanding all the various opinions that prevail in relation to this subject, there is still a possibility of discerning between truth and falsehood. The former may with certainty be ascertained, and the latter detected by the Word of God. "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." *

The charge of narrow-mindedness and bigotry, cannot with justice be brought against those who do not value themselves on any thing that may be reckoned, by other professors, *the badge of a party*, if it is not such a thing as ought to distinguish all the followers of Christ from the world. We sincerely wish and pray for the salvation of all men; and feel ourselves bound by the law of Christ to serve them, both in their temporal and spiritual interests, as we have opportunity. We utterly abhor all persecution for conscience sake, on any pretext whatever; and are so decidedly fixed in our principles against violence in the cause of religion, that if any law were enjoined upon us, which our conviction of duty to God would not suffer us to obey, and if redress were not to be obtained by peaceable remonstrances, our only alternative would be either to submit to punishment, or flee from the impending danger.† We do not burden the consciences of the people of God with standards devised by human wisdom, and enforced by human authority; being fully persuaded, that "all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works."‡ And we impose upon them no terms of communion, except those which are clearly and unalterably fixed by the Word of God. While we condemn as antichristian all religious societies in which no proper distinction is made between believers and unbelievers, we readily acknowledge that the

* Isaiah, viii. 20.
† 1 Pet. ii. 19—21. Matt. v. 38—42, and x. 23.
‡ 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17. See Appendix, No. II.

Gospel is preached by some of their teachers, that many individuals among them are the children of God, and that such are mercifully preserved in this perilous situation, and nourished by the Word of God, notwithstanding the countenance which they give to the profanation of Divine ordinances. We love them so far as they appear to be of the truth, and are willing to have social intercourse with them in every thing that is not inconsistent with our duty to Christ. If we must be accounted illiberal because we will not sin, I hope it shall be our endeavour, through the strength of Divine grace, to bear this reproach with patience, and even to esteem it an honour; for we know that in far more degrading circumstances, the servants of God have rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for the name of Jesus.* We are persuaded, however, that the most complete separation from unbelievers in observing the ordinances of the Gospel, is consistent with the truest liberality of sentiment, and the greatest enlargement of heart; for Paul introduces in this manner one of the strongest prohibitions against having fellowship with unbelievers, that is to be found in all the New Testament, "O ye Corinthians, our mouth is open unto you, our heart is enlarged. Ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own bowels. Now for a recompense in the same, (I speak as unto my children,) be ye also enlarged. Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers." †

Without enlarging further on what may be deemed a personal justification, though it proceeds not solely from that motive; I appeal to the Sacred Oracles. By them let all our doctrine be fairly tried, and by their decision let us stand or fall.

IV. I now request your attention to a few practical observations.

First, In general, we ought to consider the fulfilment of the prophecies respecting those perilous times which were to come in the last days, as a most convincing evidence of the truth of Divine revelation. From these prophecies there was reason to expect a false profession of the name of Christ in the world; that it would spread very extensively, and continue during the long period of twelve hundred and sixty years,‡ under the evil auspices of a wicked power, denominated *the Beast*, or the eighth head of Daniel's fourth beast. In one of Daniel's visions, he saw four great beasts representing four mighty successive empires, which were founded by the Babylonians or Chaldeans, the Medes and Persians, the Grecians, and the

* Acts, v. 41. † 2 Cor. vi. 11—15.
‡ Dan. xii. 7. Rev. xi. 3, and xii. 6, 14.

Romans. The last of these beasts had ten horns, signifying the ten kingdoms into which the Roman empire was afterwards divided. And "among them another little horn" came up, "before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots: and behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things." His look was more stout than his fellows.* This is explained by John's vision of "a scarlet-coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns," on which a woman sat, having upon her "forehead a name written, Mystery, Babylon the great, the mother of harlots, and abominations of the earth.†" The same thing is evidently represented by the beast which John saw, and the fourth beast of Daniel. Each of them had ten horns, and the eighth head of the beast described by John, answers to the little horn mentioned by Daniel. That the empire of Rome was intended, is perfectly clear from its being the fourth and last of those universal monarchies which are described by Daniel, from what is affirmed of it in this and his other visions, from the explanation given of these in the Revelation of John, and particularly from his pointed and minute description of the seat or throne of this monstrous power. It is described as a city built on "seven mountains," "that great city which reigneth over the kings of the earth;" ‡ none of which things could then be affirmed of any city in the world but Rome. The same power which is represented in these and other prophecies, by the figure of a devouring beast exercising his tremendous authority in behalf of Babylon the great, the mother of harlots, and putting to death all who refused to worship him, is elsewhere denominated Antichrist, the Man of Sin, and the Son of Perdition. By him *the mystery of iniquity*, which forms a shocking contrast to THE MYSTERY OF GODLINESS, was brought to its maturity and perfection. ‖

The whole history of the profession of Christianity for many ages past, and particularly from the time of the destruction of the Roman Empire, soon after which the Man of Sin was revealed, or fully manifested in all his deformity, is an exact fulfilment of these prophecies; some of which describe his exaltation and triumph, and others of them his gradual downfall, with the circumstances attending it, and the means by which it was to be accomplished. No human sagacity could possibly have foreseen a train of such wonderful events, extending to distant ages, and involving the subjection of many kingdoms to an usurped spiritual power, which was to maintain its ascen-

* Dan. vii. 7, 8, 20. † Rev. xvii. 3. ‡ Rev. xvii. 9, 18.
‖ 1 John, ii. 18, 22, and iv. 3. 2 Thess. ii. 3, 7.

dency for a much longer period than the duration of any other universal monarchy that had existed in the world; and by means entirely different, in some respects, from those which had been formerly employed for the purpose of subduing and enslaving mankind. The prospect of these things filled the Apostle John himself with the highest astonishment. Speaking of the false church, he says, "I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus; and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration," or astonishment.* We see also at this day, many of these prophecies fulfilled before our eyes. The Man of Sin consumed in a great measure by the Spirit of the Lord's mouth, yet maintaining still a high degree of authority in several of the kingdoms of Europe; and his influence in some measure, either directly or indirectly, felt throughout the whole of them, as has been already shown. But in order to obtain that confirmation of our faith which the accomplishment of these predictions ought to produce, it is necessary to form a just estimate of the profession of Christianity which now generally prevails. To those who esteem it *real Christianity*, there can be nothing more stumbling; for much of the wickedness that ever has been committed by man, has been perpetrated by those who assumed the Christian name. Whereas, if we admit that they were Christians *only by profession*, then Christianity has nothing to do with their crimes, any farther than as its Divine origin is proved by their accomplishing the prophetic Scriptures. In proportion as men professing godliness have sold themselves to commit iniquity, in the same proportion has the Word of God been fulfilled.

What a striking thing is it, that our faith should be strengthened by a survey of the most melancholy scenes that ever took place in the world! Events which seemed to threaten the final overthrow of the Gospel itself, and the total extirpation from the earth of all its genuine believers!

It would be a happy thing if professing Christians were disposed to consider, rather in a religious than in a political light, all those calamities which arise from the disputes of contending parties, about worldly power and pre-eminence in particular countries; and the more extensive scenes of human misery in all its forms, that flow from "nation rising against nation, and kingdom against kingdom." By all these events, the Word of God will be fulfilled, and they will finally issue in the complete destruction of the Man of Sin, and the universal prosperity of the Redeemer's kingdom. What is the duty, in the

* Rev. xvii. 6.

mean time, of those who believe the Gospel? Not surely to become parties in a violent struggle to secure or to obtain the riches, honours, and pleasures of this life; nor, on any pretext whatever, to resist "the powers that be." It is a dangerous thing to intermix religion with politics; those who are much engrossed with the latter, will not in general continue long to regard the former; for the two pursuits are as incompatible as serving God and Mammon. If it is true, as I think has been proved, that the kingdom of Christ cannot be promoted by any of those means which are employed in establishing and defending worldly kingdoms, there is evidently no just pretence for being engaged in keen political disputes on the score of religion. Nay, I will venture to affirm, that in proportion as you yield to temptations of this kind, your conduct will be in danger of becoming a disgrace to your profession. The law of Christ, in the same peremptory manner, prohibits his disciples from asserting their *civil rights* by any violent and forcible means; for it requires them to be subject to kings and rulers in every country where their lot is cast, without any respect to the nature of the governments under which they live, or the propriety or impropriety of the measures that may be pursued by the civil powers.* The Christians at Rome, who inhabited the very centre of despotism, who had certainly just grounds of complaint against their supreme ruler, the cruel tyrant Nero, and who had been deprived of their ancient constitution and liberties in an arbitrary and lawless manner, were nevertheless commanded, in the most express terms, "every soul" of them, "to be subject unto the higher powers;"† and the unlawfulness of resistance on the part of Christians, is put beyond all doubt by these words, addressed to the same persons; "Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God; and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation,"‡ or rather judgment. I will not say that you have no grievances; but whatever these may be, you must be sensible they are not to be named in comparison with those which the first Christians endured, and that many blessings are secured to you by the mild and auspicious laws of your country, for which they merely depended on the will of an arbitrary monarch. The obligation, therefore, to "submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake,"‖ must be at least equally binding on you as it was on them; and you will easily perceive that no man can attempt to show the opposite, without plainly contradicting the Word of God, either

* Matt. xxii. 21. 1 Tim. i. 1, 2. Tit. iii. 1, 2. 2 Pet. ii. 10.
† Rom. xiii. 1—8. ‡ Verse 2. ‖ 1 Pet. ii. 13—18.

from ignorance of its meaning, or from a desire to pervert it. Besides a great variety of exhortations which are given to Christians with respect to all the other relative duties, those which we owe to our civil governors are inculcated in the New Testament in no less than seven different places, in some of which they are dwelt upon at greater length than any thing else of the kind, except the duties which servants owe to their masters. There is something, I doubt not, in human nature, which made this necessary in both cases: and as there is no want of evidence at the present day of the truth of what I now affirm, it is so much the more incumbent on you to give an example in your conduct, of that due subordination which the Word of God inculcates.

Second, Enough has been said to convince you of the necessity of attending to the Word of God, and refusing implicit subjection to any set of men in matters of religion. What immense numbers of the human race have brought about their own destruction, by following their spiritual guides! They have in many instances been blind leaders of the blind; and both have fallen into the ditch.* It is not safe even to follow in all respects those who are reckoned eminent, or who in former times may have been eminent for their faith and holiness. The best men are liable to err, and you ought never to suppose that any sentiment must be right, or that any thing is a duty, merely because the one was held, and the other practised, by eminent saints or great divines. The antiquity of certain principles and practices, is no recommendation to them, unless you can trace them back to the days of the Apostles, and clearly establish them from the doctrine which they taught, and the conduct which they approved. It would save a great deal of trouble, and prevent the danger of falling into many errors, if people, instead of searching the works of the primitive Fathers, in order to sanction their systems of divinity, would apply at once to the New Testament; which, besides being divinely inspired, has a higher claim to antiquity, and is more simple and easy to be understood. I do not question that some things recorded in the New Testament, may be illustrated and confirmed by the writings of those who lived near the time of the Apostles; but whatever is found in these unsupported by the former, must go for nothing in the opinion of all those who tremble at the Word of God.

From any accounts that have been transmitted to us of the times immediately after the Apostles, there is no great reason to boast of their purity. The churches soon began to depart

* Matt. xv. 14.

from the original simplicity of the institutions of Christ, and gave many proofs both of superstition and self-righteousness. They suffered their teachers to assume a degree of power and pre-eminence, totally inconsistent with humility and self-denial, which so well become the followers of Christ. They raised the elders of churches to the dignities of diocesan and metropolitan bishops; and thus prepared the way for that fatal dominion of the clergy, which enabled them to enslave and persecute the people of God, and almost to annihilate the true profession of the name of Christ in the world. They introduced philosophy into the Christian system, and darkened the simple revelation of the Gospel by the wisdom of the schools. It does not appear, however, that the first churches had in general many wicked characters among them, till long after the time of the Apostles. On the contrary, they frequently went beyond the rule of the Word of God, in delaying to admit new converts, as well as persons who had been excommunicated, and who seemed deeply to repent of their wicked conduct. This again arose from their having corrupted the doctrine of the Gospel. They were not sufficiently aware, that they themselves could only live by free and sovereign mercy, and therefore they refused to have compassion on their fellow sinners.

The more we examine the writings of men, and the practice of churches, the more will we see the absolute necessity of regulating our own sentiments and conduct by the Word of God alone. We ought not even to follow, in all respects, the example of those churches, whose history is recorded by inspired men; for they give us a faithful account of their crimes, as well as their virtues. And if it is necessary to observe what parts of *their* conduct were approved, and corresponded with the doctrine of the Apostles, before we can be warranted to follow them, it must be still more necessary to compare with the same rule, the doctrine and practice of the most eminent fathers, and the most ancient and renowned churches. Indeed, if this sentiment had not prevailed at the time of THE REFORMATION, the world would still have been sunk in Popish darkness, superstition, and idolatry. It is only to be regretted that THE REFORMERS, great and beneficial as their labours were, did not consistently adhere to it in all respects; for *they* also pleaded the authority of the Fathers, and established human standards of Christian faith and practice.

Third, I would exhort those who know the nature of Messiah's kingdom, who have been delivered from antichristian delusions, and made partakers of those privileges which were

enjoyed by the first churches, to retain a deep sense of the evils you have escaped, and the blessings which you now enjoy. Show this, by keeping at a distance from every thing that would endanger your returning to Babylon, even in your hearts. "Touch not the unclean thing;" and remember, that with this the Lord connects these comfortable words, "I will receive you, and will be a father unto you."

Consider also, I beseech you, how much reason you have to regret the mis-improvement or abuse of privileges. Have you been all this while "growing in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ?" Have you sufficiently made it to appear, that you are not barren and unfruitful in this excellent knowledge, by its producing in your hearts and lives all those practical effects which are attributed to it in the Word of God? Are none of you become lukewarm or indifferent about the awfully important concerns of eternity, and insensible to those benefits which you might obtain, by attending to the ordinances with that fervency of soul which becomes redeemed sinners? We may be more free from gross and scandalous sins, from dangerous errors in doctrine, and from outward irregularities in conducting our worship, than were some of the first churches. But alas! we come far short of them, in the enjoyment that many of them had of the love of God and the hope of eternal life, in their self-denial and mortification to this world, their fervent love one to another, their humility, meekness, and patience under sufferings.* While they were "in heaviness through manifold trials," they rejoiced in the prospect of the heavenly inheritance, "with joy unspeakable and full of glory." Our separation from the world, therefore, though it is both a privilege and a duty, furnishes us with no pretext for glorying over other men. It is a most humbling consideration, that we have been separated to so little purpose; and ought, I am persuaded, to lead every one of us to deep repentance. Perhaps, it cannot be said with truth, that all of you are as much exercised to godliness, in every respect, as many of those whose ignorance you profess to pity. Will not this provoke you to emulation? Are you not ashamed to give to the world around you, such a mean and unworthy example of the influence of those sublime principles which you profess to hold?

Beware of treating with indignity and contempt those who

* These opposite things are affirmed of different persons. Dangerous errors in doctrine, and indulging in gross sins, are totally incompatible with the enjoyment of the love of God, and the hope of eternal life.

may differ from you about the things of which I have been speaking; especially when you have any reason to think that they are taught of God to know the truth as it is in Jesus. Instruct them with meekness, as they are able to bear it; admonish them with tenderness and affection; and make it evident, by the whole of your deportment, that you have nothing in view but the good of their souls. At the same time, yield none of the sayings of Christ to their prejudices or aversion; maintain with unshaken firmness, and in its own due place, every thing that you have learned from the Word of God. Even when on proper occasions you represent the extreme wickedness of a false and corrupt profession of Christianity, of which it is our duty to speak, when called to it, with the utmost plainness, avoid every indiscreet and abusive manner of speech; and imitate, in all your expressions, the serious, solemn, and dignified language of the Word of God.

Fourth, I shall now use the freedom to address myself to those who believe the Gospel, and enjoy peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; but have not yet turned away from nominal professors, nor connected yourselves with the churches of the saints. You have heard some account of the perils of the latter days, and the obligations you are under, as having received mercy, to be closely united with your brethren in Christ Jesus, and to acknowledge none as such but those who "are of the truth, and hear Christ's voice." You will judge of the truth or falsehood of all that I have spoken: I presume not to dictate to your consciences. But remember, that whatever judgment you now form, you will be accountable for it at the judgment seat of Jesus Christ. You are in danger of being led aside by the error of the wicked, by the prejudices arising from education and habit, by respect for the opinions of those whom you have been taught to venerate, and by the fear of reproach; which they who make a true profession of the name of Christ have reason to expect. You have need, therefore, to examine the Word of God with much care and diligence, and to pray earnestly for his enlightening Spirit, that you may be led into all truth, and made willing to yield obedience to that which you already know.

Give no ear to that principle which many have espoused, that a number of the laws which Jesus Christ hath given to his churches are of little or no consequence; that we may be very good Christians without obeying them; and that, in order to our having fellowship with all the people of God, of whatever denomination, it is necessary and proper that we should act in opposition to some things which we acknowledge are the com-

mandments of the Lord. One would think the mere stating of this principle would be sufficient to render it odious in the eyes of all who fear God. Some things undoubtedly, in distinction from others, are "the great and weightier matters of the law." But does not Jesus say, with respect TO BOTH, "*these* ought ye to have done, and not to leave *the other* undone?" * And on another occasion he says, "Whosoever, therefore, shall break *one of these least commandments*, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven." † When recommending, by his own example, one of those offices of brotherly love, which, though it should be necessary on particular occasions, some would consider as trifling, and others as degrading, he also says, "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them."‡ No Divine commandment ought to be reckoned of small importance, though some, in comparison with others, may be called the least. Nor is there any Christian principle more clearly established than this, that the disciples of Christ are bound to do *all things* whatsoever he hath commanded them. "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all," because he resists the authority of THE GREAT AND ONLY LAWGIVER, "who is able to save, and to destroy." ‖

When we read of the disobedience of the first man, we see nothing more than a transgression, exactly similar to those which are avowed by many serious professing Christians. What immorality was there in eating the forbidden fruit? None, surely, except what arose from the Divine prohibition. Yet this law was enforced by an awful sanction, "In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die."§ The sentence was executed: all men die; all derive a corrupt nature from apostate Adam; and, on account of their own sins, are exposed to everlasting punishment. I am not speaking to infidels, who would scoff at these things: I know that you believe them. This signal display of the Divine vengeance against what some call a trivial offence, ought therefore to deter you from hearkening to the lie of Satan, who says, "Ye shall not surely die."¶

Perhaps some of you may plead that you are bound, in the judgment of charity, to consider the persons with whom you walk in the fellowship of the Gospel as real Christians; or at least, that though many of them give little evidence of this by their conduct, yet you are not warranted positively to judge them as unbelievers. It is difficult to reason on a matter of this kind with those who have no fixed sentiments about the

* Matt. xxii. 23. † Matt. v. 19. ‡ John xiii. 12—18.
‖ James ii. 10. and iv. 12. § Gen. ii. 16, 17. ¶ Gen. iii. 4.

proper evidences of genuine Christianity. I am far from wishing you to form a harsh and unwarrantable judgment. But surely those things which distinguish believers from unbelievers, are not all of a negative kind. Real Christians must be expected to give some positive evidences of their faith in Christ. They will show by their conversation that they understand and love the Gospel; they will conscientiously perform every moral duty, and also keep those sayings of Christ which have nothing to recommend them but his authority, so far as they are instructed in the knowledge of them. They will in a particular manner attend to the duties of brotherly love, by which the disciples of Christ are known to one another, and to all men.* Well, then, are all the persons with whom you walk in religious fellowship of this description? Can you say in truth and sincerity, if you belong to the national church, or to others which are similar in their constitution, and have adopted her standards, that the churches of which you are members are "in God the Father, and in the Lord Jesus Christ;" and that it is proper to denominate them "an habitation of God through the Spirit—the temples of the living God?"† Do you really believe that the individuals of which they are composed are "beloved of God, called to be saints—faithful brethren in Christ Jesus"—and those who are "called by God the Father to the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord?"‡ If they are not entitled to these appellations, in what respects do they resemble the primitive churches, which were thus described? And if they are quite a different kind of churches, how can you think it a duty incumbent on you to continue in their communion?

It has been admitted that the people of God are in that Babylon which is the antitype of the ancient city of this name, in which the children of Israel were held in captivity. They are in the great city itself, and in all her distant provinces, which in a greater or less degree imitate her iniquitous conduct. But I beseech you to observe, that the Word of God does not promise them perfect safety and consolation there. The ancient people of God, when they dwelt in the capital of Chaldea, and in some of its provinces, felt themselves in bondage, and had no happiness or comfort but in the prospect of returning to Zion. They sat down by the rivers of Babylon; they wept when they remembered Zion; they hanged their harps upon the willows; and, in answer to the insulting de-

* John xiii. 34, 35. 1 Thess. i. 3, 4.
† 1 Thess. i. 1. Eph. ii. 22. 2 Cor. vi. 16. 1 Cor. iii. 16, 17.
‡ Rom. i. 7. 1 Cor. i. 2, 9. Col. i. 2.

mands of their enemies, they said, "How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land? If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy."* I doubt not you have often had feelings of the same kind, though you might not so perfectly know the cause of your bondage and distress. Can you expect peace or security, while you are at a distance from your Father's house, and captives in a foreign land? But, what is still worse, you are willing captives, and refuse to be set at liberty. The Lord hath broken that power which kept his people in spiritual bondage. He hath appeared in his glory, building up Zion, hearing the prayer of the destitute, and not despising their prayer. † But while he is turning again the captivity of Zion, you are like them that dream. ‡ You can scarcely believe that there is any reality in what you see; your minds are full of darkness and confusion, and you know not where to turn yourselves for comfort and relief. In the mean time, the voice from heaven which calls you to make your escape, waxes louder and louder; and Providence concurs with the prophetic Scriptures, in warning you that the time draws nigh, when another voice shall be heard saying, "Babylon the great is fallen!" ‖ You have now many opportunities of knowing your duty, beyond those who lived in former ages, when the Man of Sin was in the zenith of his power. What excuse then can you plead for living in a state of carnal security, and listless inactivity, amidst those great and imminent dangers to which you are exposed? I am persuaded, that when the final destruction of Babylon comes, the Lord's people will be kept in safety, not by being preserved there, but by their hearing his voice, and being delivered from all connexion with antichristian societies. It was in this manner that the disciples of Christ were saved from that destruction which came upon the city of Jerusalem: they made their escape from it, in the faith of what our Lord had prophesied, and in obedience to his express commandment. §

If you will not be moved by these terrors of the Lord, allow me to beseech you by his mercies. Do you really enjoy the forgiveness of sin, through the atonement of the Son of God? Hath the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, according to his abundant mercy, begotten you again to a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead? And will you disregard any thing that he hath spoken? Ought

* Psal. cxxxvii. 4—7.
† Psal. cii. 16—18.
‡ Psal. cxxvi. 1.
‖ Rev. xiv. 6—8.
§ Mat. xxiv. 15—19.

not the love of Christ to constrain you, because you thus judge, "that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them, and rose again?" * Are you not convinced in your own minds, that it is none of the effects of genuine and fervent love, to consider *how little* of his will you may obey, and yet be in a state of safety? Love will dispose you to "show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light," and minutely to enquire what is the will of Christ in every particular, that you may obey it. The entire neglect of the commandments of Christ, or a long-continued hesitation about putting them in practice, is not very consistent with the powerful, operative, and constraining principle of love. "This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous." † And Christ says, "if ye love me, keep my commandments.—He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me.—He that loveth me not, keepeth not my sayings." ‡

I shall conclude with the following words of the Apostle John, which have an immediate reference to the subjects we have been considering; for some of these subjects occupy a great part of the book of the Revelation. "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: FOR THE TIME IS AT HAND." ‖

* 2 Cor. v. 14, 15.
† John v. 3.
‡ John xiv. 15, 21, 24.
‖ Rev. i. 3.

END OF DISCOURSES ON PURITY OF CHRISTIAN COMMUNION.

APPENDIX.

No. I.

THOUGHTS ON THE WEEKLY CELEBRATION OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

It may be useful to give a brief summary of the scriptural evidence which confirms the assertion in the First Discourse, that the primitive Christians observed the ordinance of the Lord's Supper every first day of the week.

From the words of our Lord at the institution of this ordinance, we do not positively ascertain *how often* it ought to be celebrated by his disciples. The only thing that points at this is what he said concerning the cup,* "This do ye, *as oft* as ye drink it, in remembrance of me;" and in the Apostle Paul's observation which accompanies this, "For *as often* as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come."† As professing Christians generally take some latitude in matters of this kind, many of them have supposed, from these expressions, that the frequency of the Lord's Supper is discretionary on their part, and that Christ and his Apostles have left them at liberty to attend to it, as often or as seldom as they find it convenient. The consequence has been, that in all the congregations belonging to the Church of Scotland, and in many Dissenting congregations, they observe it only once or twice a-year. According to their own principles, however, they need not keep this ordinance more frequently than once in seven years, if they should so incline. This alone is sufficient to convince all who seriously wish to know their duty, that it is not probable, at least, that a matter of such importance would be left on a footing so exceedingly vague and undetermined. But

* 1 Cor. xi. 25. † Verse 26.

supposing it were altogether optional and voluntary on our part, whether would a grateful and affectionate remembrance of the love of Christ in giving his life a ransom for many, and an earnest desire of enjoying the blessings signified in this ordinance, induce us to keep it every Lord's day, or once in twelve months? The answer that cannot fail to be given to this question by all the genuine disciples of Christ, will nearly settle the point in dispute.

But this point ought to be fully determined by the example of the churches that were planted by the Apostles; and there is very complete evidence to show that they partook of the Lord's Supper every first day of the week. We are informed concerning the church at Jerusalem,* that they continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine, the fellowship, the breaking of bread, and the prayers. Did they continue steadfastly in "the breaking of bread," which is just another name for the Lord's Supper, used also in Acts xx. 7, if they only partook of it two or three times in the year? No person would venture to affirm that *in this manner* they continued steadfastly in the Apostle's doctrine, the fellowship, and the prayers. How then can this be reckoned a steadfast continuance in an ordinance, which was intended as a perpetual remembrancer of the Lord's death until he come again? So convincing has this passage appeared to some, that they have run (only in theory indeed) to the opposite extreme, and maintained that the first Christians observed this ordinance on other days besides the Lord's day; perhaps always when they were publicly met for prayer, and hearing the doctrine of the Apostles. There is no instance, however, in all the New Testament, of any church eating the Lord's Supper except on the first day of the week; for the other expression, "breaking bread from house to house," is explained by their eating "their meat with gladness and singleness of heart," † which evidently refers to their common meals.‡ The sacred historian, therefore, must be understood as describing the practice of the church at Jerusalem *on the first day of the week*, when he says they continued steadfastly in the breaking of bread. Though they had many other meetings for public worship, that was the only day on which they had an opportunity of observing *all* the ordinances of the Lord Jesus, and they neglected none of them. *On that day* they were assembled when they received the promise of the Holy Spirit; for it was the fiftieth day from that on which the sheaf

* Acts ii. 42. † Acts ii. 46.

‡ The Lord's Supper, and an ordinary meal or a feast of charity, are likewise both termed "breaking bread" in Acts xx. 7, 11.

of the first-fruits was waved before the Lord. This happened that year on the Jewish Sabbath, and that Sabbath-day was, on this account, called by the Jews an high day * As they began the observance of these ordinances on the Lord's day, so they continued steadfastly in them every succeeding first day of the week. It appears also, that when the church at Corinth "came together into one place," that is, as I understand it, on the first day of the week, one principal thing that they had in view was, "to eat the Lord's Supper." †

Another very express example of this, is recorded in the twentieth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. "Upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them." ‡ Does not every one perceive, that the very intention of the church at Troas, in coming together on the first day of the week, or the chief design of it, was to break bread in remembrance of the death of Christ; and that even the preaching of the Apostle Paul is mentioned as a secondary consideration? This simple narration of facts is decisive, and as clearly proves the weekly celebration of the Lord's Supper, as if the sacred historian had affirmed it in the most unequivocal terms. On the other hand, it is equally plain that they did not keep this ordinance on any other day; for the Apostle had been at Troas from the preceding Monday, the time of his residence there being in all seven days. ‖ He seems to have tarried so long, for this purpose among others, that he might have an opportunity of joining with the church in this comfortable ordinance on the appointed day. This he did, notwithstanding his anxiety to get forward on his journey; and that some urgent cause made him anxious to proceed, appears by his departing at the break of day, after a sleepless night; for he continued his speech until midnight; and when he had eaten, and talked a long while, even till break of day, so he departed. §

There is no clearer example for keeping the first day of the week as the Christian Sabbath, than for observing the ordinance of the Lord's Supper on that day; and it will be admitted that the authority for the former chiefly depends on the approved example of the first Christians, which is recorded for our imitation. I do not mean the setting apart of one day in seven for the immediate service of God. The obligation of this duty is founded on the original sanctification of the seventh day, on which God rested from his work of creation; and on

* John xix. 31. See Lev. xxiii. 10—17.
† 1 Cor. xi. 20. See also chap. xvi. 2.
‡ Acts xx. 7. ‖ Verse 6. § Verses 7, 11.

the fourth commandment of the moral law, delivered by Moses. The great and powerful motives that are presented to us in the Gospel, enforce the observance of *another day*, for which this additional reason is given, that Christ hath entered into his rest, having ceased from his own works, as God did from his.* But the disciples of Christ require satisfactory evidence, that the same authority by which the seventh-day Sabbath was appointed, and then abrogated as a part of the Jewish system, for in this view it was a shadow of things to come, † now obliges them to sanctify *the Lord's day*, and to keep it holy. If the example of the first Christians, under the direction of the inspired Apostles, is sufficient for this purpose, why should not the example of their eating the Lord's Supper on that day, be admitted as equally binding on the churches of Christ? There is not, in all the New Testament, any one specified instance of a church being assembled for Divine worship on the first day of the week, who did not meet for this, among other purposes, that they might commemorate the death of Christ in the ordinance of the Supper. That authority, therefore, which has distinguished one Christian Sabbath from another, and made some of them, in comparison of the rest, *high days*, cannot plead the Word of God for its foundation. Every Lord's day is a day of exultation and triumph, to those who enjoy the hope of eternal life through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead; and it is fit that on all such days they should commemorate, in the appointed way, the grand foundation of this blessed hope.

It would not be at all surprising, though some loose professors of religion should begin to argue in the same way against keeping the Christian Sabbath. The primitive churches, they might say, met sometimes on the first day of the week; but, perhaps, this was only once or twice in the year, or as often as they found it convenient; for it is not affirmed, in any part of the New Testament, that this was their constant regular practice every Lord's day. Such persons would be justly reckoned irreligious and profane: but how would we confute them? I suppose by affirming that the few instances which are left on record, of the first Christians observing the ordinances on the Lord's day, are examples to us of what their practice was on every such day. And is it not equally proper, that we should regard a few specified instances of their *breaking bread* on that day as a sufficient proof that they always did so?

Thus it is clearly established, that the churches of Christ ought to keep the ordinance of the Lord's Supper every first

* Heb. iv. 3—11. † Col. ii. 16, 17.

day of the week; and it is remarkable that all the arguments which have been used against this practice, when they are duly considered, tend only to illustrate and confirm the obligations which render this the indispensable duty of the people of God.

No. II.

THOUGHTS ON THE NATURE AND TENDENCY OF HUMAN STANDARDS OF RELIGION.

In the Third Discourse, it is affirmed that there ought to be no other standard of religion among Christians than the Word of God. It is certainly not sufficient, however, that either teachers or members of Christian churches, should merely, in general terms, profess their belief of THE SCRIPTURES. Many do so who neither understand the Gospel nor keep the sayings of Jesus Christ. But how is this to be remedied? Not by requiring people to sign *human standards;* for these are as little believed by many who subscribe them as the other, and the doctrine of the Scriptures cannot be more clearly and decisively expressed than by the Word of God itself. The churches of Christ must be capable of judging what doctrine is contained in the Word of God, otherwise they could not be certain whether human confessions and catechisms were agreeable to it or not. What good purpose then can be answered by the strange expedient of making or adopting an *imperfect standard*, when they are already in possession of one that is ABSOLUTELY PERFECT? They can only know the faith of those who apply to them for admission, by hearing them profess it in distinct and intelligible words, and by the evidence which their conduct affords, that they have "received the love of the truth." They judge, in the best manner they can, how far these agree with the Word of Truth which God himself hath spoken, and with the effects produced by it on those who first believed it. If this is not fairly and openly submitted to the judgment of all the members of a church, what proper scriptural evidence can they have, that unbelievers are not received into their communion? And with respect to their teachers, if they follow the primitive example of choosing them from among themselves, they will be perfectly acquainted both with their sentiments and conduct.*

Some wish to get rid of human standards, because they con-

* Acts i. 21, to the end. Chap. vi. 3, 5. Chap. xiv. 23. Tit. i. 5—10.

tain *too much* of the doctrine of the Scriptures; and others, because they do not in all respects exactly correspond with it. In fact, every honest man who disbelieves the peculiar doctrines of Christianity, and every sincere believer who is sufficiently scrupulous about maintaining the truth in its original purity, will object against creeds and confessions *when they are made standards of faith;* and it is only in this point of view, that I presume to censure the whole of them without exception. I do not condemn a mere confession of faith, or a declaration of the sentiments held by any particular body of Christians. Such may not be free of errors and imperfections; but as no one is bound to assent to it as a term of communion, nothing is proposed by it but information and instruction. The evil which I complain of, is that of making any human production whatever a standard of faith, and of the duties which we owe to God.

Human standards are not merely useless: they are also hurtful and dangerous. It will be admitted that there exists a danger of being led into error by the very best of them. Some numerous and respectable bodies in this country, which have long adhered to the standards of the national church, have lately begun to question the authority of some things contained in them; and, this being the case, how can they know with certainty that errors do not still remain undiscovered? Christians are too apt to err on many occasions, by departing from the perfect rule of faith and practice which the Lord himself hath given them; but how great must be the danger of those whose very standards are erroneous! The Word of God is not merely *a rule*, but THE ONLY RULE by which the sentiments, inclinations, and conduct of all men ought to be regulated, and by which they will be judged at the last day.* It contains the most awful threatenings against those who shall add to it, or take any thing away from it;† and, far from delegating to any class of men a power to form additional standards, there are few things against which it more frequently cautions us, than the danger of following any rule but itself, or submitting to the authority of man in the things of God.‡ Nay, it declares that many would be seduced from the faith by corrupt and deceitful teachers, who would arrogantly assume the power of making laws for the disciples of Christ.‖ Indeed, if it is ad-

* Psal. xix. 7—12. John, xii. 48. Rom. ii. 16.

† Prov. xxx. 6. Rev. xxii. 18, 19.

‡ Matt. xv. 3—10. Gal. i. 8, 9. Eph. iv. 14. Col. ii. 8, 9, 10, 18. 2 Thess. ii. 15. 2 Tim. iii. 13, to iv. 5.

‖ Acts, xx. 30—32. 2 Pet. ii. 1, 2. Dan. vii. 25. 2 Thess. ii. 4, 10—12. Rev. 8, 12, 15—17.

mitted that we have a Divine revelation at all, it necessarily follows that no man, or body of men, if they are not divinely inspired, whatever may be their gifts, their knowledge of the Scriptures, and their pretensions to sanctity, can be warranted in making any standard in addition to that which it contains. It will be acknowledged by all whom I now address, that Divine revelation ceased with the Apostles.

It is pleaded by those who favour human confessions of faith, that they are founded on the Holy Scriptures, and agreeable thereto. Nay, some of their standards maintain, while they are in the very act of establishing *another rule*, that "the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament are *the only rule* of faith and manners!" The same formularies which require the assent of probationers, ministers, and elders, to this grand and incontrovertible truth, oblige them also to declare, that "they sincerely own and believe *the whole doctrine* contained in the Confession of Faith, Larger and Shorter Catechisms, compiled by the Assembly of Divines that met at Westminster, to be founded on the Word of God;" and that "they resolve, through Divine grace, firmly and constantly to adhere to it, and to assert, maintain, and defend it, to the utmost of their power, against all errors and opinions contrary to it." Could any words express a more unqualified assent to a *human rule* of faith and manners, or impose a more solemn obligation to maintain and defend it? Yet men of sound principles are not convinced that the whole of its doctrine is consonant to the Holy Scriptures. And, at any rate, the indecency of requiring from Christian teachers a solemn profession of their faith in the writings of fallible men, might easily be discerned by all who venerate Divine revelation, and pay a due respect to the rights of conscience.

If any human standards agree entirely with the Word of God, it is evident that the same thing cannot be justly affirmed of the whole of them; for they do not perfectly correspond with one another. And all the ingenuity of man is incapable of making it appear, that the leaders in this business are fully persuaded of the sufficiency of the Scriptures. If the Word of God is a perfect and infallible standard, it must for this very reason be THE EXCLUSIVE ONE; and when it is not really and consistently held as the only rule of faith and practice, it is impossible that it can be considered as completely sufficient, in all respects, for this purpose. Those who adopt *another rule*, must undoubtedly reckon it deficient, either with respect to the matter which it contains, the order in which its doctrine is delivered, or the simplicity, clearness, and precision with which it states that which is necessary to regulate the faith and practice of Christians. So far as any person is satisfied with the

Scriptures in all these particulars, in the same proportion will he doubt the propriety of human standards, unless he is resolved to maintain that it is needful to add something to *that which is perfect ;*—a position so absurd, that it would be an affront to the human understanding to offer any argument against it.

Is there no danger in thus lessening the authority of the Word of God, and exalting that of synods, councils, and assemblies of uninspired men ? Has it no tendency to palm their sentiments on mankind as *divine truths*, when you denominate them tests and standards of the Christian faith ; make an assent to them a term of communion, at least of what is called ministerial communion ; and refer to them as decisive in all matters of church discipline and government, and sometimes in controversies about points of divinity ? Is it possible, in these respects, to pay a higher degree of deference to the Word of God itself? Will the disciples of Christ examine the Scriptures with candour, and receive all their information concerning the things of God, immediately from that unerring source of knowledge, while such a formidable barrier stands in their way? Or can it be supposed that those who duly venerate the Holy Scriptures, will subscribe or assent to the works of men, in such a way as to give a tacit acknowledgment of their perfection, *without some remorse of conscience ?* For certainly those standards which contain *the rule and measure of our duty to God*, ought to be ABSOLUTELY PERFECT.

It would require a volume to show the evils which arise from human standards of religion. The REFORMERS in the sixteenth century did a most essential service to mankind, when they were made the instruments in the hand of God of bringing the Scriptures to light, and publishing them in the different languages of the nations, after they had been long withheld by *the Man of Sin*. But they prevented the full effect of that light which might have been expected to proceed from the Word of God, by placing human standards of doctrine between it and the people ; and their example has been hitherto faithfully imitated by Protestants of almost all denominations. These *uninspired traditions of the Fathers*, are not however now held in such high veneration as they formerly were. The light of DIVINE TRUTH is gradually dispelling the darkness and prejudice which they have been the means of perpetuating to this day ; and all the exertions of their most zealous defenders, can only procure them a feeble assent. Sooner or later *they must sink into oblivion ;* but " THE WORD OF OUR GOD SHALL STAND FOR EVER." *

* Isa. xl. 8.

END OF APPENDIX.

LOYALTY, OR OBEDIENCE

TO CIVIL RULERS,

ENFORCED BY ARGUMENTS

FOUNDED ON

JUST VIEWS OF GOVERNMENT.

TO WHICH IS ADDED, A VINDICATION OF SOME DISSENTING CONGREGATIONS FROM THE CHARGE OF DISLOYALTY.

FIRST PUBLISHED IN MDCCXCIX.

DISCOURSE.

"LET EVERY SOUL BE SUBJECT UNTO THE HIGHER POWERS. FOR THERE IS NO POWER BUT OF GOD: THE POWERS THAT BE ARE ORDAINED OF GOD. WHOSOEVER THEREFORE RESISTETH THE POWER, RESISTETH THE ORDINANCE OF GOD; AND THEY THAT RESIST SHALL RECEIVE TO THEMSELVES DAMNATION: FOR RULERS ARE NOT A TERROR TO GOOD WORKS, BUT TO THE EVIL. WILT THOU THEN NOT BE AFRAID OF THE POWER? DO THAT WHICH IS GOOD, AND THOU SHALT HAVE PRAISE OF THE SAME: FOR HE IS THE MINISTER OF GOD TO THEE FOR GOOD. BUT IF THOU DO THAT WHICH IS EVIL, BE AFRAID; FOR HE BEARETH NOT THE SWORD IN VAIN: FOR HE IS THE MINISTER OF GOD, A REVENGER TO EXECUTE WRATH UPON HIM THAT DOETH EVIL. WHEREFORE YE MUST NEEDS BE SUBJECT, NOT ONLY FOR WRATH, BUT ALSO FOR CONSCIENCE' SAKE. FOR, FOR THIS CAUSE PAY YE TRIBUTE ALSO: FOR THEY ARE GOD'S MINISTERS, ATTENDING CONTINUALLY UPON THIS VERY THING. RENDER THEREFORE TO ALL THEIR DUES: TRIBUTE TO WHOM TRIBUTE IS DUE; CUSTOM TO WHOM CUSTOM; FEAR TO WHOM FEAR; HONOUR TO WHOM HONOUR."

Rom. xiii. 1—8.

ALTHOUGH the duties which we owe to THE HIGHER POWERS have been explained in many publications, the Author of the following Sermon does not recollect that he ever saw a Scriptural account, at any length, of the *reasons* why subjection to lawful authority is so frequently enjoined in the Word of God. The loyalty of many, proceeds from causes which are merely *political;* but those who truly fear God will not be governed by such motives. The arguments which prevail with them, are those which *ought to affect the conscience;* and which are neither the offspring of worldly wisdom, nor of blind enthusiasm.

The duties in the text are some of those to the performance of which Christians are besought by the mercies of God;* those mercies which are displayed in the justification of the ungodly, by faith in the righteousness of Jesus Christ,† and in the complete and eternal salvation of Jews and Gentiles; "For the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be

* Rom. xii. 1. † Chap. iii. and iv.

saved." * Allow me, therefore, on this great and leading principle of Christian obedience, to request your particular attention to the arguments by which our subjection to the higher powers is enforced in the Word of God.

You are all acquainted with the nature and extent of the duties which we owe to our lawful superiors, to which you have been often exhorted, and which, I can honestly say, have been exemplified by the uniform submission which you have hitherto yielded to all who are in authority over us. And as my chief design at present is to show the *grounds* of that subjection, allegiance, or loyalty, which we owe to civil rulers, I shall only mention, very briefly, the various particulars of which it consists.

First, The leading thing which is principally insisted on in the Word of God, and which indeed includes every thing else, is the obligation laid upon us to conduct ourselves as good, peaceable, and useful members of society—to avoid all those evils which magistrates are bound to punish, and to govern all our actions by the principles of truth, justice, and universal benevolence towards all mankind. To "lead a quiet and peaceable life, in all godliness and honesty,"† is what we owe to our civil governors and to our fellow-subjects.

Second, The law of Christ prohibits speaking evil of dignities.‡ It is our duty to avoid every thing that might tend to injure the reputation of any man; but the evil of slander is greatly increased, instead of being diminished, as some suppose, when it is directed against public characters.

Third, We are commanded to honour the king, and all who are in authority over us.‖ This also, in a general view, is our duty towards all men, "who are made after the similitude of God;" but a peculiar honour is due to those who are ordained of God to administer justice, and maintain order in society.

Fourth, The payment of tribute, custom, or taxes, is strictly enjoined upon us. It is due from us as the price of that protection which every Government in some degree affords, and which we in this country so eminently enjoy. It ought therefore to be paid with the same fidelity, punctuality, and cheerfulness, with which we reckon ourselves obliged to discharge all our other lawful debts.

Fifth, We are bound by Divine authority to offer up "supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks for all men," and in an especial manner "for kings, and for all that

* Rom. x. 12, 13.
† 1 Tim. ii. 2.
‡ 2 Pet. ii. 10. Jude, ver. 8.
‖ 1 Pet. ii. 17.

are in authority." * And this we ought to do in the sincerity of our souls, from an earnest desire for their salvation, and for their obtaining from the Most High every qualification which is necessary to enable them to rule with wisdom, justice, and humanity.

We shall now proceed to the main design of this discourse, which is to show, that the subjection which we owe to civil rulers is not an arbitrary appointment, of which we can give no account; but that it is obedience to those who are declared by God himself to be our lawful superiors, and similar in its nature to the subjection which a wife owes to her husband, a child to his parents, or a servant to his master. If I shall succeed in establishing this position, it will follow, of course, that our subjection ought not to be the unwilling obedience of slaves, but performed as a matter of conscience, with alacrity and satisfaction; or, in the language of Scripture, "heartily as to the Lord, and not unto men." † If our obedience be not of this kind, although it may be sufficient to prevent us from suffering any temporal inconvenience, it will be of no avail in the sight of Him who searcheth our hearts and trieth our reins.

That I may not seem to overlook objections, though they be not formally stated and answered, I shall on this part of the subject observe, that of all the different classes of men who possess lawful authority, magistrates alone are never officially addressed in the New Testament. On this account, and because it gives no preference to any particular form of civil government, and no violence being allowed in the kingdom of Christ, some deny, or faintly acknowledge any authority of rulers and magistrates which cannot be maintained without violence. Such persons consider them as a necessary evil, merely permitted and over-ruled for good; comparing them to ravenous animals, which are a curse to mankind, and are useful only because they destroy other animals more hurtful than themselves.

They who understand the nature of Christ's kingdom will easily perceive that the kingdoms of this world could not be governed by laws which are only adapted to the government of a spiritual and heavenly kingdom, which is not of this world. The sword has no place in the kingdom of Christ, whose religion cannot be promoted or defended by any sort of outward violence, and who hath said, "All they that take the sword shall perish with the sword." ‡ But coercion and carnal weapons are necessary for the defence of a nation of this world against external enemies, and for maintaining peace and good order within itself. In this manner, therefore, Christ dis-

* 1 Tim. ii. 1—5. † Col. iii. 23. ‡ Matt. xxvi. 52.

tinguishes his kingdom, "If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews;" * implying, surely, that while he would not permit his servants to use violent means for the defence even of their King and Lord, no worldly kingdom could exist without such means of protection. One of the laws of Christ's kingdom, which is clearly stated, and frequently enjoined in the New Testament, is, that his disciples should not resist evil, or render evil for evil to any man.† What would become of a nation of this world, if its magistrates were to fellow this precept in relation to crimes committed against society? If they are Christians, they ought to regulate all their conduct as private individuals by the laws of the kingdom of heaven; and their public conduct as magistrates should be guided by the principles of justice which the light of nature teaches, and which are fully opened up and explained in the Word of God. It is their duty also to follow, as their unerring rule, the account which the Scriptures give of the nature and ends of their office, and the way in which it ought to be exercised for the good of mankind. But none of these things will ever lead a Christian magistrate to imagine, if he be in his right reason, that he ought to suffer crimes against society to go unpunished. On the contrary, he will consider himself as "the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil." ‡

I beseech you, therefore, not to form the extravagant conclusion, from the circumstance of rulers not being officially addressed in the New Testament, and from its having prescribed no specific kind of civil government, that the world is left in a state of anarchy, and that men are permitted to commit the most enormous crimes with impunity! These things only show that the kingdom of Christ is not of this world, and that his disciples are obliged to submit to *every government;* which indeed is also expressly required by this commandment, "Submit yourselves to *every* ordinance of man, for the Lord's sake." ‖ Had the

* John xviii. 36. † Matt. v. 39. Rom. xii. 17. 1 Thess. v. 15.

‡ Rom. xiii. 4.

‖ 1 Pet. ii. 13. This does not hinder Christians from using Scriptural arguments against ecclesiastical governments; for such profess to be the kingdom of Christ, and these powers are not the ministers of God to us for good. If they establish a hierarchy similar in its leading features to the civil governments of the nations, and diametrically opposite, in many respects, to the nature of the kingdom of heaven, a complete disavowal of their spiritual authority becomes the indispensable duty of those who fear God, though the latter must on no account oppose them by any violent means. The truth of the Gospel, and the doctrine of the kingdom of heaven, are alone their standard and their weapons; and this is their motto, "Great is the truth, and it shall prevail."

law of Christ addressed rulers as it does husbands, fathers, and masters, when it describes the nature of their office, and represents it as their duty to inflict temporal punishments on those who disturb the peace of society, it must have supposed them to be Christians; and these injunctions to Christian magistrates would undoubtedly have been understood as descriptive of the nature of Christ's kingdom, which would have led to the most fatal errors with respect to that important subject.

Jesus Christ came to establish a spiritual kingdom, and he did not interfere with the government of nations, any farther than by giving a commandment to "render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's." But though he refused to divide an inheritance between two contending brothers,* and to pass the sentence of death on a woman taken in adultery,† it would be both irrational and profane to imagine from this, that inheritances ought not to be divided according to the rules of justice, or that adultery is no crime, or even that it ought not to be punished, if not with death, yet in some awful and exemplary manner.

That the office of magistracy is lawful and honourable, and that we are bound to submit to it, not from necessity, or as an unavoidable evil, but as one of our temporal blessings, will appear from the following considerations.

First, The Divine appointment of this office, which is frequently mentioned in the text. "There is no power but of God; the powers that be are ordained of God." To resist the power, is "to resist the ordinance of God." He is also termed "the minister of God" twice in verse fourth, and again in verse sixth. I shall afterwards show, that this ordinance is the effect of infinite goodness; and that it is not such in the same sense with famine, pestilence, and war; or with storms and tempests, which "fulfil his word" and are subject to his control. At present your attention is called merely to this consideration, that God hath ordained government and subordination among his rational creatures. The supreme Lord of creation is the source of all authority and power; he gives it to whom he will; and he hath ordained men to act as his ministers, and to rule the nations.

The institution of government is universal. It prevails in heaven, where the blessed inhabitants enjoy the immediate presence of God, and fall prostrate before his throne. Among the angels of God there are principalities, and powers, and might, and dominion; ‡ cherubim and seraphim; angels and archangels. In this world, notwithstanding the confusion and

* Luke xii. 13. † John viii. 11. ‡ Eph. ii. 21, and iii. 10.

disorder which have been introduced by man's apostasy from God, the Divine institution of government is continued. Subordination appears in all human societies; in families, in corporations, in cities, in provinces, and in the most extensive kingdoms and empires. Nay, it obtains in some degree even among bands of robbers and hordes of savage men, who submit to their chiefs and leaders, and are governed by acknowledged and simple laws.

The history of all ages abundantly proves that this order in society is not an accidental thing—that it is essential to human nature—and that no rational beings can subsist without it. But the Word of God alone assures us, that it proceeds from the ordination of the Almighty Jehovah, who is "wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working, the King of kings, and Lord of lords." Knowing this, therefore, we ought to submit to the appointment of God, though he had not been pleased to reveal his gracious design in this universal institution of government.

Second, This ordinance is intended to promote the happiness of mankind. "He is the minister of God to thee *for good.*" Even when this minister of God appears in all the terrors with which he is clothed by the authority of God himself, it is still for the good of men. "He is not a terror to good works, but to the evil. If thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain, for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil." And, on the other hand, "Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same." These good and beneficial designs are attributed by the Apostle Peter, not only to God, who is the source of all good, but also to the higher powers in appointing deputies, imperfect and corrupt as many of them are. Governors are sent, he says, by the supreme Ruler, "for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of them that do well." * Indeed every one, except evil-doers themselves, must perceive that the appointment is good in its own nature, and essential to our peace and security. I must, however, go a little farther, and assert, on the authority of the Word of God, that government in general actually does, in a considerable degree, accomplish the wise and gracious purposes of him who hath appointed it.

This is declared in plain terms with respect to the Roman Government, under which the Apostles and other first Christians lived. It is affirmed in relation to the people of God at Rome, the capital of the Roman empire, where was erected at that time the throne of Nero, one of the greatest tyrants that ever swayed a sceptre. The powers which are spoken of

* 1 Pet. ii. 14.

throughout the whole passage are not ideal powers, but the powers which then were, and actually exercised the functions of government. "Rulers ARE not a terror to good works, but to the evil. He IS the minister of God to thee for good. He IS a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil."

It was said also by the Lord himself, when distinguishing his kingdom from the kingdoms of this world, that "the kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and they that exercise authority upon them are called *benefactors*;"* and it does not appear that he disapproved of their being so denominated. When, upon another occasion, he proposed to his disciples for their imitation, the conduct of a servant who first serves his master, and then eats and drinks himself, without imagining that he does more than his duty, while his master has no idea that any favour is done to him by this service, it was evidently not with an intention to condemn such conduct in masters towards their servants.† Yet it would be criminal in one to use a Christian brother, who is not his servant, in the same manner. Thus it is also lawful that the kings of the Gentiles should exercise authority upon them, and on that account be called benefactors; while Christ's law to his disciples is, "It shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister." ‡

Much evil, it is true, was done by the powers which then were. Many of them were infamous in their private characters; covetous, unjust, and oppressive in some of their public conduct: and great persecutors of the people of God. Yet they punished crimes against society; they protected good men; and on several occasions they were the means of delivering the Apostle Paul from the rulers and people of the Jews, who would have put him to death had they not been prevented by the interference of the Roman Government. On one of these occasions, Festus, the Roman governor, behaved with great propriety. He answered the chief priests and the elders of the Jews, who desired to have judgment against Paul, "It is not the manner of the Romans to deliver any man to die, before that he who is accused have the accusers face to face, and have license to answer for himself concerning the crime laid against him." ‖ Thus were the Jewish ecclesiastical rulers convicted by a Roman civil governor of a base attempt to subvert the principles of justice, and prevented from committing a most atrocious murder!

A great many evils may be perceived by Christians in the

* Luke xxii. 25.
† Luke xvii. 7.
‡ Matt. xx. 26.
‖ Acts xxv. 16.

best civil governments; and some of them are so extremely bad, that we who enjoy a very high degree of liberty and security, can scarcely conceive how it could be possible to live under them. But any government whatever is better than none. Compare the situation of the most degraded people in the world, who have rulers of any kind, with a state of complete anarchy, which gives an opportunity to every man to oppress, and plunder, and assassinate whom he pleases with impunity; and then I am sure you who know the corruption of human nature, and how it will operate when it is unrestrained, will be abundantly sensible of the blessings which mankind derive from any thing whatever that deserves the name of government. Viewing the matter in this light, you will be able to perceive the propriety of the Apostle's unqualified assertion, that "there is *no power* but of God; the powers that be are ordained of God." For though many of them come far short of answering the end of their appointment; yet if, upon the whole, they are "a terror, not to good works but to the evil," no Christian need hesitate to affirm, that they are ordained of God.

Any thing in the public conduct of rulers which has a tendency to frustrate the design of their office, may with all safety be pronounced an abuse of power, and cannot possibly be sanctioned by the Word of God, nor merit the approbation of just men. But such things ought not to be attributed to *the office* of magistracy, nor should they lessen it in our esteem. The ordinance of God claims respect from us, however deficient men may be in accomplishing the gracious purposes which he intends by it; and this deficiency, if we judge properly, will not in the smallest degree prevent our subjection to the powers ordained of God. It is so in other cases. There are many fathers and masters who act an undutiful part towards their children and servants. But we do not on that account traduce the relation of master and father, or consider their dependents as under no obligation to obey their just commands. On the contrary, Christian servants are enjoined, when they *do well* and suffer for it, to take it patiently; and to be subject to their masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward. And it is added, "This is acceptable with God." *

Our obedience does not by any means imply an approbation in all respects of the conduct of our superiors. We must not approve, nor seem to approve, of any thing which the law of God condemns, though it might almost seem to be justified by the strongest political necessity. But let us judge with can-

* 1 Pet. ii. 18, to the end.

dour, avoiding all exaggerations, and speak even of real evils, when we are in duty called to do so, and not otherwise, in such a way as will show that we respect the powers that be, and that we are deeply sensible of the high privileges we enjoy as British subjects.

The rulers of nations are frequently compared in Scripture to the *ordinances* of the sun, the moon, and the stars, which were appointed "to rule the day and the night." * Every one knows how essentially necessary the influences of these heavenly bodies are to the life and happiness of man. If this world were deprived of the light and heat of the sun, what a chaos would it be! Yet the rays of the sun are not always salutary. Men, in different quarters of the world, suffer many evils from experiencing too much or too little of its influences. Shall we therefore say that the sun is not a blessing? Or, because storms and tempests are often the scourges of the human race, shall we begin to quarrel with the air we breathe, and the other elements around us?

Third, The duties which we owe to magistrates, and the manner in which these are enforced in the Word of God, strongly confirm the principle for which I now contend.

Observe what is said in general about subjection to the higher powers, and you will see that it is not merely yielding to powers which we cannot resist, or suffering patiently the hardships and inconveniences to which we may be exposed by the exercise of arbitrary power. Though this is also our duty, it is not the thing immediately intended by subjection to the powers as the ordinance of God, and his ministers for the good of all men. The same Apostle directs Titus to put believers of the Gospel "in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work." † The subjection which is enjoined, therefore, is *obedience* to all their lawful commands; and we only give a proper example of it when we are "ready to every good work." This places magistrates in the situation of lawful superiors, in like manner as the obligation imposed upon children to obey their parents, and upon servants to obey their masters, clearly proves that their fathers and masters have a lawful authority over them. This farther appears from our being called to be subject for *conscience sake*, ‡ and *for the Lord's sake*; ‖ and from what is said of the danger of resistance, the punishment of which is sanctioned by Divine authority, verses 2, 4. Are we bound thus

* Gen i. 14—19. Psal. cxxxvi. 8, 9. Jer. xxxi. 35, 36. Isa. xiii. 10, 11. Rev. vi. 12, 13, 15.

† Tit. iii. 1. ‡ Rom. xiii. 5. ‖ 1 Pet. ii. 13.

to submit to lawless oppressors, to whom God hath given no authority over us? Must we yield subjection for conscience' sake to robbers and murderers, and allow them to butcher our wives and children before our eyes? Shall they who resist in the case supposed, "receive to themselves condemnation?"

The law against evil speaking is of the same nature. It is no crime surely to narrate, with just indignation, the evils done by wicked men who assume lawless power in order to oppress their fellow-creatures, and who "sleep not except they have done mischief." Why then are we prohibited from speaking evil of *dignities?* Undoubtedly, because they are entitled to peculiar respect as our lawful superiors, whatever personal characters they may sustain. Some ungovernable men are denounced by Peter and Jude, as "*not being afraid* to speak evil of dignities;"* and this is attributed to their being "presumptuous and self-willed," regardless of all authority, either human or Divine. To revile, to endeavour to set aside, or to represent as unlawful, *the office of magistracy*, and to consider the use of the sword by those who are invested with authority as a mere usurpation of lawless power, is to speak evil of them in the highest sense of that expression. Nay, this would be to speak evil of a Divine ordinance, and to resist the authority of the God of heaven. Calumny and slander affect only the characters of particular men, and expose them personally to contempt; but when the attack is levelled against all authority, by whomsoever it may be exercised, its tendency is to sap the foundations of society, and to introduce universal anarchy and disorder.

We are commanded to "honour the king, and to render honour to whom honour is due." Not surely because our king and rulers assume an authority opposite to the will of God; but, on the contrary, because they are his vicegerents to keep the world in awe; and because, in the good providence of God, we are protected by their means, and have an opportunity to "lead a quiet and peaceable life, in all godliness and honesty." We honour them on account of the resemblance which they bear to God as the great ruler of the universe, in their public and official character.

"Supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks are to be made for kings, and for all that are in authority." Here, again, their being in authority is mentioned as the reason why we should pray for them; and we cannot, without manifest absurdity, suppose that it is an authority not derived from God, or not agreeable to his will. Is it not because they are

* Jude, verse 8.

our *lawful superiors*, and on account of the blessings which we enjoy under them, that we are called to *give thanks* for their appointment and administration? For though "all things shall work together for good to them that love God," and they have cause of thanksgiving in every situation; yet those things which are in their own nature blessings, and not curses, are generally represented in the Word of God as the ground of thanksgiving. The people of God are not commanded to praise him either for public or private evils, which, considered in themselves, are causes only of grief and sorrow, though their gracious heavenly Father may over-rule them for good.

It is our duty to pay taxes for the support of government. Our rulers in demanding these taxes are not to be considered as a set of plunderers. If they were, we could only have been called upon to submit to this as an injury, which yet, as Christians, we ought not to resent. But the higher powers, in levying those taxes, are said to be "the ministers of God, attending continually on this very thing," verse 6th. Tribute, custom, fear, and honour, are likewise affirmed to be *due* to them; implying, evidently, that all these are just debts. We owe them to the higher powers in the same way as we owe love to all men, verse 8th.

Fourth, Many persons connected with government were converted in the time of Christ and his Apostles, without being obliged to resign their employments as unlawful.

Among these was Matthew the publican, or tax-gatherer, who was called, as he sat at the receipt of custom, to be an Apostle of Jesus Christ;* Zaccheus also, who was chief among the publicans, and who made a humble and striking confession, not of the unlawfulness of his office, but of his own dishonest and avaricious conduct in the exercise of it.† Besides these particular instances, there are several intimations with respect to publicans in general paying great attention to the doctrine of John the Baptist, and of Christ, who was "a friend of publicans and sinners." Among those who received particular instructions from John, for the regulation of their conduct, there were "publicans who came to be baptised, and said unto him, Master, what shall we do?"‡ He did not tell them that they must be no longer publicans, which he would have done if their employment had been unlawful. But he directed them how to conduct themselves in the execution of their office with fidelity and justice; "Exact no more than that which is appointed you." When Jesus Christ, at a subsequent period, described the ministry of John, he said, "All the people that

* Luke, v. 27. † Luke, xix. 2—9. ‡ Luke, iii. 12, 13.

heard him, and the publicans, justified God, being baptised with the baptism of John. But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptised of him." *

Rulers of the Jews, and members of their supreme council or sanhedrim, were disciples of Christ. Such was Nicodemus, who "at the first came to Jesus by night," but was afterwards an avowed disciple of the crucified Saviour, when "he came and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pounds weight," to anoint the dead body of his Lord.† Joseph of Arimathea was another "honourable counsellor; a good man and a just, who also himself waited for the kingdom of God." He was a member of that council which condemned the Son of God; but it is observed concerning him, that "he had not consented to the counsel and deed of them" who said, "He is guilty of death." This Joseph gave the fullest proof of his being a disciple of Jesus; for "he went unto Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus. And he took it down, and wrapped it in linen, and laid it in a sepulchre that was hewn in stone, wherein never man before was laid." ‡ An account is also given in Acts xviii. of the conversion of two persons who were chief rulers of synagogues, Crispus and Sosthenes, one of whom immediately suffered persecution as a disciple of Christ, for he was beaten before the judgment-seat. And we are informed, "that a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith." ‖

Soldiers, who are generally accounted farther than most men from the kingdom of heaven, were nevertheless made partakers of that salvation which is in Christ Jesus. Some of them came to John's baptism; for "the soldiers likewise demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do?" It is perfectly clear, that John did not consider the business of a soldier as absolutely unlawful in its own nature, otherwise he would have had nothing to say to them, in relation to it, but "resign your employment as soldiers." On the contrary, he laid down regulations for their conduct in the Roman army; for he said unto them, "Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages." § It cannot be supposed that the injunction, "Do violence to no man," signifies, that they were no longer to act as soldiers; for in that case it would have been necessary to advise them to be content without their wages. The violence against which he cautions them, is evidently all cruelty, wanton severity, and lawless violence, to

* Luke, vii. 29, 30. † John, xix. 39. ‡ Luke, xxiii. 50—54.
‖ Acts, vi. 7. § Luke, iii. 14.

which their occupation as soldiers did not necessarily lead them. Christ said of a centurion, or a commander of a hundred men, "Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no not in Israel."* And the household of Cornelius, who was also a centurion, were the first Gentiles to whom the Gospel was preached after the resurrection of Christ. Of Cornelius it is said, that "he was a devout man, and one that feared God, and that his prayers and his alms had come up as a memorial before God." And one of his household servants is called "a devout soldier," an epithet which cannot be conjoined with any unlawful calling or wicked character, as a devout robber, or a devout murderer! While Peter preached the Gospel to these soldiers, and to the rest of the household of Cornelius, "the Holy Spirit fell on all them who heard the Word, and they spake with tongues, and magnified God, and were baptised."†

Roman governors, and one of the supreme judges of the famous city of Athens, were converted to the faith of Christ by the preaching of the Apostles. "Sergius Paulus, the deputy of the island of Cyprus, believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord."‡ And Publius, the chief man, or governor of the island of Melita, seems also, from the extraordinary kindness which he showed to Paul, to have been a disciple of Christ, though the Scripture does not expressly say so.‖ The testimony is more explicit with respect to Dionysius the Areopagite, or senator of Athens; for the sacred historian informs us, that when Paul had finished his sermon, "he departed from among them. Howbeit, certain men clave unto him and believed, among whom was Dionysius the Areopagite."§

There were also Christians in Cæsar's household, who were probably either persons who had some concern in the Roman Government, or the household servants of Nero, who ministered to the pomp and splendour of his table, or his retinue.¶ Zenas, a lawyer,** and Erastus, the chamberlain of the city of Corinth,†† are likewise mentioned by Paul as fellow Christians; and you will all remember the remarkable account which is given by the writer of the Acts of the conversion of the keeper of the prison at Philippi, of whom it is said, that "he rejoiced, believing in God with all his house."‡‡

Thus we are furnished with a history of the conversion of men of almost all ranks in society, and men who, as Christians, filled many of the offices under Government, from the governor of a Roman province down to the keeper of a common

* Matt. viii. 10. † Acts, x. ‡ Acts, xiii. 7, 8, 12.
‖ Acts, xxviii. 7, 8, 10. § Acts, xvii. 33, 34. ¶ Phil. iv. 22.
** Tit. iii. 13. †† Rom. xvi. 23. ‡‡ Acts, xvi.

prison. There is no hint given of any one of these persons resigning his employment when he came to the knowledge of the truth, or of its being unlawful or dishonourable. Matthew indeed was called from the receipt of custom; but this seems to have been for no other reason, than that for which Peter and others were called to forsake their lawful employments, and to follow Christ. "Go thou and preach the Gospel of the kingdom," was a commandment which superseded every thing else. It did not even admit of a man first going home to bid his friends farewell, or to bury his father.* We may easily point out the inexpediency of Christians being engaged in some of the occupations which have been mentioned; but to prove that they are absolutely unlawful in their own nature, is impossible. Had they really been of this description, there must have been a plain intimation of this in some one or other of the numerous cases which have been mentioned; and the want of it is a clear and undeniable proof that Christians ought to respect magistracy, and all that necessarily pertains to it, as the ordinance of God for the good of mankind.

Fifth, There are several examples in the conduct of the Apostle Paul, both of the high respect which he entertained for magistrates, and of his claiming the protection of the laws of his country, when he was treated unjustly by tumultuous assemblies, or by public men.

On one occasion, he inadvertently spoke with great severity to the Jewish high priest. "God shall smite thee, thou whited wall; for sittest thou to judge me after the law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law?" It would seem that this was no more than Ananias deserved; for, without the smallest provocation, he had "commanded them that stood by to smite Paul on the mouth." Yet when some of them said, "Revilest thou God's high priest?" he answered, "I wist not, brethren, that he was the high priest: for it is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people."† From this we may learn the nature of the evil speaking with respect to rulers, which the Word of God condemns. That which Paul spoke was truth, and might have been innocently said to another man. But it was evil speaking, because the person to whom it was addressed was the ruler of God's people, and sitting in judgment according to the law, though he acted in a manner unworthy of his office.

When Paul, on several occasions, was brought before Felix and Festus, Roman governors, and before King Agrippa, to

* Luke, ix. 59, to the end. † Acts xxiii. 1—6.

answer for himself as a criminal, though he had done nothing worthy of death or of bonds, he uniformly behaved with the utmost respect, and acknowledged, in the most explicit terms, the jurisdiction of his judges. Thus, when he appeared before Felix, he respectfully waited till "the governor had beckoned unto him to speak;" and "then he answered, Forasmuch as I know that thou hast been of many years a judge unto this nation, I do the more cheerfully answer for myself,"* &c. On another occasion, he said to Festus, "I stand at Cæsar's judgment-seat, where *I ought to be judged.*" And when Festus interrupted him in his defence before Agrippa, "saying, with a loud voice, Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad;" he answered in a manner which at once indicated his submission to his judges, and his confidence in the goodness of his cause, "I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness."† The title which he gave to Festus, is the same which Tertullus had formerly given to Felix, and must therefore have been the honourable appellation which was commonly given to a Roman governor.‡ For though a hired pleader might have been suspected of flattery, we are sure that Paul, when he was brought before kings and governors to bear witness to the truth, gave no flattering titles to men, though he spoke to them in the most respectful terms as his lawful superiors.

You see, therefore, that the Apostle Paul exemplified the doctrine which he taught with respect to subjection to the higher powers, and patience under all the unjust and abusive treatment to which he was exposed. But there is another trait in the character of this extraordinary man, which deserves your attention. Though he always yielded, without resistance, to unavoidable oppression, yet he sometimes obtained redress, or escaped from danger, by pleading his privileges in a bold and dignified manner; thus joining the wisdom of the serpent to the harmlessness of the dove. He alarmed the magistrates of Philippi by saying, "They have beaten us openly, uncondemned, being Romans, and now do they thrust us out privily? Nay, verily, but let them come themselves, and fetch us out." And he actually obliged them to come to the prison, to *beseech* him and his fellow-prisoner, and to discharge them in a public and an honourable manner.‖ He wished, I presume for the sake of others, to make them sensible of the danger to which they exposed themselves by such illegal proceedings; while he showed him-

* Acts xxiv. 10.
† Acts xxvi. 24, 25.
‡ Acts xxiv. 3.
‖ Acts xvi. 35—40.

self above retaliation or revenge, by declining to lodge any complaint against them for their unjust procedure, which could not have admitted of any defence.

Afterwards, when he was at Jerusalem, having received information that forty Jews had bound themselves by an oath to assassinate him, he applied for protection to the chief captain, who sent him to Cesaria with an escort of four hundred and seventy armed men. To this act of humanity, Claudius Lysias was induced by his having "understood that Paul was a Roman;"* and the manner of his obtaining this intelligence is too remarkable to be passed over in silence. The Jews had apprehended Paul, and were going to kill him. The chief captain with soldiers and centurions came and rescued him, but commanded him to be bound with two chains, supposing him to be an Egyptian, and the ringleader of four thousand murderers. But Paul undeceived him, by informing him that he was "a Jew of Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city;" and obtained liberty to speak to the people.† When a second uproar took place, and Paul was again in danger of being torn in pieces by the Jews, "the chief captain commanded him to be brought into the castle, and bade that he should be examined by scourging." Paul remonstrated against this, "Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman, and uncondemned?" which not only prevented the stripes which he would otherwise have received, but alarmed the chief captain with respect to his own safety. "He was afraid, after he knew that he was a Roman, and because he had bound him." He also loosed Paul from his bonds, convened the Jewish council, and gave him another opportunity to plead his own cause.‡

The circumstances which have been mentioned, sufficiently evince the danger of Paul's situation at Jerusalem. And therefore, when Festus asked him to go to that city, and there to be judged before him, Paul said, "I stand at Cæsar's judgment-seat, where I ought to be judged; to the Jews have I done no wrong, as thou very well knowest. For if I be an offender, or have committed any thing worthy of death, I refuse not to die; but if there be none of these things whereof these accuse me, no man may deliver me unto them. I appeal unto Cæsar."‖ This was an appeal from the injustice of an inferior magistrate to the supreme ruler of the empire. And it is at once an example to us of subjection to the higher powers, as our acknowledged and lawful judges, and also of remonstrating, in a peaceable and legal manner, against injustice and oppres-

* Acts xxiii. 27.
† Acts xxi. 27, to the end.
‡ Acts xx. 22, to the end.
‖ Acts xxv. 10, 11.

sion, and claiming the protection to which we are entitled by the laws of our country.

Sixth, I request your attention to a still greater example than that of the Apostle Paul, with respect to one of the things in which we ought to show our subjection to civil powers. Jesus Christ himself paid tribute at Capernaum, though it appears from what he said to Peter upon that occasion, that, if he had so inclined, he might have pleaded an exemption. "Of whom, says he, do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute? of their own children, or of strangers? Peter saith unto him, Of strangers. Jesus saith unto him, Then are the children free. Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money; that take, and give unto them for me and thee."* This tax, which seems rather to have been expected than demanded by those who said to Peter, "Doth not your Master pay tribute?" was levied for the service of the temple. Jesus, as the Son of God, and the Lord of the temple, was free; he was not obliged to pay it; for the kings of the earth do not take custom or tribute of their own children, but of subjects, who are in this passage distinguished by the name of strangers. But though he was thus free, he performed a miracle to enable Peter to pay the tax. And observe the reason which he gives for it, "Lest we should offend them." It is therefore our duty to contribute more for the support of government than can be legally demanded from us, rather than to offend them by withholding it; and to give such evidence of a friendly disposition, as will place us far above every suspicion of disloyalty. In fine, we ought to show a willingnesss to yield to the higher powers every thing, except conscience, for the sake of peace.

Seventh, Though the New Testament does not establish any particular form of civil government, nor address rulers of any description, as such; yet the nature of their office is fully explained, and the duties incumbent upon them are as clearly pointed out as those of husbands, parents, or masters.

We have seen that it is the duty of the magistrate to be a terror, not to good works, but to the evil; that he ought to protect just men; and, as the minister of God, to be a revenger to execute wrath on him that doeth evil; and that he is also God's minister in keeping the public peace, and administering justice. He is consequently under an obligation to maintain internal peace in his dominions to the utmost of his power,

* Matt. xvii. 24, to the end.

and to give the disciples of Christ an opportunity to lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty; which is one leading object they have in view when they pray for kings, and for all that are in authority. Those of them who fully understand the nature of the Christian profession, will ask from magistrates no favour in their religious capacity, except toleration with respect to matters of conscience, and the general protection which is due to all good subjects. But these are blessings which they highly prize.

It would seem also that, in the sequel of Rom. xiii., the Apostle narrates the crimes which ought to be punished by civil rulers. For after stating the duties which we owe to them, he immediately adds, in connexion with its being also our duty to owe no man any thing but love; "He that loveth another, hath fulfilled the law. For this, thou shalt not commit adultery, thou shalt not kill, &c., and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law." Now, as this is true with respect to the Divine law, so is it also with respect to human laws: they are fulfilled by him who loves his neighbour, for he is thus prevented from committing adultery, murder, theft, and every crime by which he could injure his neighbour. And though the Divine law takes cognizance of many crimes which escape punishment from human laws, and requires a much higher degree of love to fulfil it, yet the design of both is the same in this respect; they are intended to prevent us from doing ill to our neighbour. "The law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners," &c. * That is, the law does not threaten any punishment against the man who fulfils it: those only who are breakers of the law are justly exposed to suffer its penalty.

The Apostle Peter mentions, in like manner, the crimes which render men liable to temporal punishment, and guards Christians against the commission of those crimes, when he says, "Let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evil doer, or as a busy body in other men's matters." † And there are several things in the New Testament which clearly show that some crimes, particularly murder, ought to be punished with death. Jesus Christ says, in his sermon on the Mount, Ye have heard that it hath been "said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment." ‡ He does not reverse this *saying*, as

* 1 Tim. i. 9. † 1 Pet. iv. 15. ‡ Mat. v. 21.

he does some of those which follow in the same discourse; but, on the contrary, extends it, in what he adds as a rule of conduct to his disciples. And therefore, I understand him as declaring it to be still the will of God that a murderer should be put to death; for no other *judgment* could be pronounced upon him, agreeably to the law to which Christ refers. It is also admitted by Paul, that there are crimes which may justly be punished with death, by such judges as Festus the Roman governor, when he says to him, "If I be an offender, or have committed any thing *worthy of death*, I refuse not to die." * And one of the thieves who was crucified with Christ, who was probably not merely a thief, but one of the associates of Barabbas in the crimes of sedition and murder, confesses the justice of his punishment: "We receive the due reward of our deeds."†

But in our endeavours to find out the duties of civil rulers, and to ascertain moral duties in general, we ought not to confine our search altogether to the New Testament. The ancient law with respect to murderers, is as irreversible as it is manifestly just; "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed." ‡

God himself acted as the king and legislator of a nation of this world, when the seed of Abraham were his peculiar people. And though the principles of *true obedience* were inculcated upon them by Moses and the prophets; yet their outward conduct, *as a nation*, was regulated by a code of laws which contains a great variety of temporal punishments, similar to those which are inflicted by the legislators of all worldly kingdoms. I will not affirm that the law of Moses, in this view, was intended as a model *in all respects* for the government of other nations; because there was something peculiar in the situation of the kingdom of Israel, as the people of God, and typical of the General Assembly and Church of the first-born. But this example of the Divine government in a worldly kingdom, clearly teaches us, that it is not consistent with the nature of fallen man, that a nation of this world should be ruled without the aid of temporal rewards and punishments; and that it is the will of God that men should be prevented from injuring one another, and from disturbing the peace of society, by the fear of temporal punishment, and such other motives as can have influence upon their carnal minds. The particular punishments which the law of Moses so exactly proportioned to the nature of crimes, except in so far as the condition of that typical people was peculiar to themselves, are also the best that can be

* Acts, xxv. 11. † Luke, xxiii. 40, 41. Mark, xv. 7. Acts, iii. 14.
‡ Gen. ix. 6.

devised. Such they must be, because they were dictated by infinite wisdom, and ought therefore to be considered as the standard of right and wrong, in all matters of human government; and it contains many regulations for the conduct of judges, of which the following may be taken as a sample: "Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment. Thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor honour the person of the mighty; but in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbour."* "Thou shalt not wrest judgment. Thou shalt not respect persons, neither take a gift; for a gift doth blind the eyes of the wise, and pervert the words of the righteous. That which is altogether just shalt thou follow."† Does not every man's conscience inform him, that such laws as these are founded on the eternal rule of righteousness, and therefore must be binding upon judges to the end of time?

I now request your attention to a few practical remarks on the doctrine which has been delivered.

First. It appears, from the various particulars which have been stated from the Word of God, that the jurisdiction of civil powers is as much the ordinance of God as the air we breathe, the light by which we see, or the establishment of the system of the universe. We need not therefore be afraid, as some speak, that anarchy will be permitted to assume an universal, or even a very extensive influence; though for a while, and in some considerable degree, the destroying angel may be commissioned to stretch his sword over some guilty and devoted countries. As well may we suppose that the world will be overwhelmed by a second deluge, that the heavenly bodies will depart from their orbits, that the whole course of nature will be thrown into disorder, and the beautiful works of God reduced to their original chaos! Is not Jehovah the governor among the nations?‡ "He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire," and saith, "Be still, and know that I am God."‖ The seas may rage and the people may become tumultuous; but He who "by his strength setteth fast the mountains, being girded with power, stilleth the noise of the seas, the noise of their waves, and the tumult of the people."§ Are not the earth and the multitude of isles called to rejoice and be glad, because "Jehovah reigneth?"¶ "Clouds and darkness are round about him; righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne."** And what

* Lev. xix. 15. † Deut. xvi. 19, 20. ‡ Psal. xxii. 28.
‖ Psal. xlvi. 9, 10. § Psal. lxv. 6, 7. ¶ Psal. xcvii. 1.
** Verse 2.

evidence could we have of this from the works of providence, if men were universally permitted to destroy each other, and if there were no persons invested with sufficient authority to maintain order, and to administer justice in the earth?

Second, Beware of every thing that would seem to favour loose sentiments respecting government and subordination; for these pave the way to anarchy, devastation, and bloodshed. You have heard that government is the ordinance of God, and that it universally prevails among all his rational creatures in heaven and earth—that this ordinance essentially ministers to the good of all men—that these principles are strongly confirmed by the nature of the duties which we owe to magistrates, and the manner in which these are enforced—that persons connected with government, of almost every description, from the governor of a province to the keeper of a prison, were disciples of Christ in the days of the Apostles—that Paul acknowledged the powers that then were, as his lawful judges—that Jesus Christ himself paid tribute, that he might not offend those who expected it—and that the nature of the office of magistracy is fully explained, and the duties of it clearly pointed out in the Word of God. What further arguments could you require, to satisfy you that subordination is absolutely necessary in all its stages, and that it is your bounden duty to respect it as the ordinance of "the Most High, who ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will?"

There are many who cannot be supposed to have been much conversant with matters which respect the government of nations; and it is by no means necessary that you should be adepts in that science. In order to your performing the duties which the Word of God requires of you, it is enough for you to know what these duties are, and who are the powers; for the rulers who at present govern, or *the powers that be*, are the persons to whom we are commanded to yield obedience, unless they should attempt to prevent us from doing good, or to oblige us to do evil. In either of these cases, "we ought to obey God rather than men." At present, however, we have no such grievances to complain of: we enjoy unbounded toleration with respect to matters of conscience, and have reason to bless God for the liberty, both civil and religious, which is secured to us by the laws of our country, and which cannot be invaded by the decrees of ecclesiastical courts.

But however unacquainted with the art of governing nations, you must know something about the necessity of subordination in families. Have you not observed, that when the heads of families do not maintain the authority with which they are invested by the Word of God, and when children and servants

have it in their power to do what they please, the consequences are ruinous to those who ought to be in subjection, as well as to those who ought to govern. There is, in fact, no domestic evil that may not arise from this fruitful cause of mischief. I need not speak of the disorder which must take place in such families; for that is apparent to every one. But it is equally certain, that the lawless persons of whom they consist, are peculiarly exposed to the commission of every crime. The corruption which is naturally in all their hearts, will burst forth like an impetuous torrent when there is nothing to oppose its progress.

You have only to extend your idea of a family to that of a whole kingdom, which is in greater danger from the want of subordination, in proportion to its extent, and the number of its inhabitants; and then you will easily perceive the necessity of strict authority, and efficient government. If children be not taught to respect the authority of their parents, it is scarcely to be supposed that they will be good servants, or good subjects. The happiness of the state, therefore, as well as that of families, depends, in a great measure, on the way in which parents bring up their children.

Third, Permit me to urge upon you, not only the absolute necessity of subordination, but the propriety of attending closely to the arguments by which the Word of God enforces all the duties which we owe to our lawful superiors; that you may not be dragged into an unwilling submission, but yield a cheerful and conscientious obedience, from a sense of the privileges which you enjoy. There are many professing Christians whose sentiments, in relation to this subject, are at least extremely deficient, if they be not absolutely false. They are, upon the whole, subject to the higher powers, and far from saying or doing any thing which would expose them to temporal punishment. But they allow their minds to dwell chiefly upon the dark side of the question. They have a great many grievances to complain of; some real, others imaginary, and many of them such things as are inseparable from human nature in its present corrupt state, and which, therefore, cannot be remedied. In short, the *evils* of government preponderate in their minds to such a degree, that you seldom or never hear them talk of its *blessings*, though these are chiefly insisted upon in the New Testament. Persons of this description are not very far from adopting a most irrational sentiment—that government, as it actually exists in the world, though it may accomplish some good purposes, is yet in itself a real evil, and not authorized by the Word of God. And if their minds are so gloomy and dissatisfied, in a country where they enjoy

an uncommon degree of liberty and security, what would have been their situation at Rome in the time of Paul? Yet, even there, it would have been their indispensable duty to be subject to the higher powers, and to give thanks for the blessings which they were the means of communicating. You will easily perceive, that such a state of mind as has been now described, is opposite to contentment, and to any proper sense of gratitude to God for his mercies, as well as to the commandments which he hath given for the regulation of our conduct as members of society. The mere recital of these things, I am persuaded, is sufficient to guard you against them.

Man rather chooses to command than to obey. On that account, the Word of God not only insists at greater length upon the duties of servants and subjects, than those of masters; but also proposes motives and arguments which tend to conciliate the mind, and to convince us that subjection is by no means inconsistent with happiness. It has been observed that government is not only the ordinance of God, but that his design in appointing it was to promote the happiness of all men, and that it actually does so, notwithstanding all that abuse of power which has often been the cause of great injustice and oppression. God has placed a few men in exalted situations, not merely for the purpose of making them greater than others, but in order to secure the peace and quiet of all who are under their authority. The advantage, therefore, is ours as much as theirs; and it generally happens that those who are in subordinate situations, possess more real happiness than those who have a concern in the government of kingdoms. Let us then admire the wisdom and goodness of God in so ordering these matters, that we can live in perfect peace and security; and never forget the obligation which is thus laid upon us, to be subject to every ordinance of man, FOR THE LORD'S SAKE.

Fourth, Be assured that it is opposite to the will of God to propose the peculiar laws of Christ's kingdom as a rule to govern the kingdoms of this world. You have heard that God hath prohibited all violence in his spiritual and heavenly kingdom. But he hath ordained powers in worldly kingdoms, for the merciful purpose of preventing evil by necessary violence. He hath put the sword into the hands of the magistrate, who must not "bear it in vain;" he is bound to use it "for the punishment of evil doers, and for the praise of them that do well;" and of this we see many approved instances, both in the Old and in the New Testament.

Were it possible to establish from the Scriptures the doctrine of non-resistance *in all cases*, and to persuade the unoffending part of mankind to practise it, this would overthrow the moral

system of the universe. Some may consider human government merely as a *political* system. But so far as it promotes the happiness of society, and is exercised for the punishment of the wicked, and for the protection of the just, I am persuaded that it has also a *moral* tendency, and is a part of God's moral government of the world. In what a dreadful situation should we be placed if all crimes, even murder itself, were to go unpunished? We are absolutely certain that men would not cease to commit iniquity; on the contrary, they would be emboldened to practise it in a manner which never has been exemplified since the fall of Adam. Is this mercy? Is this the forbearance which God approves? Is it possible that the merciful spirit of the Gospel can thus lead to the permission of the most shocking crimes, and render man completely miserable?

It has been all along admitted that outward violence is excluded from the kingdom of Christ. His disciples are called, in imitation of their Lord and Master, to be peaceable, forbearing, and patient amidst many injuries; to love their enemies, to bless them, to pray for them, and to do them good. But unquestionably all this must be consistent with individual self-defence in certain cases, with judicial punishment, and with a nation defending itself against internal violence, and against the attacks of foreign enemies; neither of which can justly be considered as retaliation or revenge, in the sense in which these are prohibited by the law of Christ. I beseech you, brethren, in your own private spheres, to exemplify, to the utmost of your power, the meekness and gentleness of Christ; but never to challenge the revenging sword of the magistrate, while it is only unsheathed in behalf of the innocent, the helpless, and the oppressed. On the contrary, endeavour to strengthen his hands by your unshaken allegiance; and let it never be said, that lawful authority required your countenance and aid in such a cause, without obtaining them.

The same consequences follow, when the office of magistracy is considered, in any point of view, as unlawful in itself. Those who do not respect it as a Divine ordinance; who do not admit that it is highly beneficial to mankind; and that a magistrate, when he acts agreeably to the nature and design of his office, is doing the will of God; hold sentiments which imply that there ought to be no such thing as rule and government in the world.

I shall conclude with an advice of Solomon, "My son, fear thou the Lord, and the King; and meddle not with them who are given to change. For their calamity shall rise suddenly; and who knoweth the ruin of them both?"*

* Prov. xxiv. 21, 22.

Observe how exactly the doctrine of Solomon agrees with that of the New Testament; "Honour all men; love the brotherhood; fear God; honour the king."* And remember, that these commandments are given to the disciples of Christ, who ought to signalize themselves by a strict and conscientious performance of every relative duty. "For so is the will of God, that with well-doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men. As free, and not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God."†

* 1 Pet. ii. 17. † 1 Pet. ii. 15, 16.

END OF DISCOURSE ON OBEDIENCE TO CIVIL RULERS.

APPENDIX

VINDICATION OF SOME DISSENTING CONGREGATIONS, WHO HAVE BEEN CHARGED WITH DISLOYALTY BY THE LATE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND.

The General Assembly, in their *Pastoral Admonition*, published in June last, seem to charge all Dissenters with disloyalty to the civil government. At least they wish to render them suspected persons when they say, "Much reason there is to suspect that those who openly profess their enmity to our ecclesiastical establishment, are no friends to our civil constitution; and that the name of liberty (that is, *liberty of conscience*, it would seem) is abused by them into a cover for secret democracy and anarchy." All men, therefore, who do not believe as the national church believes, are charged with being the secret abettors of democracy and anarchy! At least such is the report which the Church has published throughout all the parishes of Scotland! Happy is it for those who fear God, and who refuse to submit their consciences to *any power upon earth*, that such accusers are not their judges, and that it is not in the power of ecclesiastical rulers to abridge their liberty.

Undoubtedly there are Dissenters who have given too much reason to suspect their loyalty. This, however, is no more than may be justly affirmed of many who, if they have any profession of religion, adhere to the national church, and who have never been censured by any ecclesiastical court. If those gentlemen who have condemned all Dissenters indiscriminately, would give themselves the trouble to enquire into the peculiar tenets of each party, they would probably find that none of them hold religious principles inconsistent with loyalty.

Be it observed, on the other hand, that there are in Scotland *Independents and Baptists*, who have never received into their communion, nor retained in it, persons who were known to be

enemies of government either in principle or in practice. They profess, it is true, no *peculiar enmity* to the Church of Scotland. The present establishment appears to them less exceptionable than any other that could be substituted in its place, and they have no interest whatever in its being supplanted or reformed. But they decidedly and completely disapprove of the constitution and establishment of *all national churches* without exception. It is equally remarkable, that the only publications which state the doctrine of subjection to the higher powers, in that extensive and unequivocal manner in which it is treated in the New Testament, *have been written by Dissenters from the national church.*

These facts speak for themselves. But lest they should appear mysterious or unaccountable to some of the high church party, a brief explanation of their causes, and of some other important matters, shall be attempted.

A church connected with the state, or which aspires after that sort of pre-eminence, may fight against the state; and, not contented with obtaining an ecclesiastical establishment for themselves. they may endeavour to persuade the civil government to persecute those who dissent from them. The General Assembly, who would have us to believe that every church is seditious except their own, refer to an instance exactly in point, when they boast of "THAT CHURCH, *in defence of which our forefathers fought and bled.*" And their advice to the people to "RECOLLECT *the counsels and the practice of their fathers,*" seems to imply that *they* also ought to fight and bleed in the same cause. It may easily be recollected that our forefathers fought not only against Popery and Episcopacy, but also against the civil powers, by whom those adversaries of the Presbyterian church were successively countenanced and established. In modern times the Church of Scotland has gradually relaxed, and seemed to be disarmed by the *Act of Toleration*, and the lenity of our civil government. She has long permitted the honour of openly maintaining her ancient warlike principles to devolve on the disciples of *Cameron*. But now her ministers appear willing to resume the sword, and to imitate the violent proceedings of their fathers; though, in other respects, many of them do not much resemble the Scotch reformers. Their boldness, though hitherto untried, may perhaps be equal to that of John Knox, who feared no man. But do they also resemble him in their knowledge of the Protestant doctrine, their warm attachment to it, and the strictness of their religious character?

With an uncommon degree of earnestness and zeal they have entreated the people to adhere to a *fighting church*, not recol-

lecting that this is one of the most prominent and distinguishing features of "*Babylon the great, the mother of harlots, and abominations of the earth!*" A FIGHTING PROTESTANT CHURCH AT THE CLOSE OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY!!! Christianity shudders at the thought, and humanity itself would drop a tear, did not all men believe that the wisdom and benignity of the British Parliament will, under God, prove a sure defence against her hostile designs, which are equally impolitic and unchristian.

When general councils endeavour to awaken the fanatic zeal of the multitude, *by celebrating the martial achievements of their ancestors in the cause of religion*, it becomes necessary to regard them with a jealous eye. Have any of the Dissenters dared to publish sentiments equally hostile to the peace of the country? If they have, let them be prosecuted by the civil power, and receive the punishment which their crime deserves. But even in that case the Church of Scotland could not consistently challenge them for adopting principles similar to her own.

It is far from being the intention of the author to represent the national church, or any other church in its collective capacity, as *actually unfriendly* to the present government. He has only endeavoured to show the *tendency* of some principles which is not always discerned by those who hold them. He even hopes that the sanguinary expressions used in the pastoral admonition, which seem to threaten the peace of the Dissenters, are nothing more than rhetorical ornaments, or the unmeaning language of persons who glory in they know not what. It is difficult, in any other way, to account for their unanimous assent to an abusive and inflammatory address, which has greatly prejudiced them in the estimation of all moderate and impartial men, who have any tolerable understanding of the nature of Christ's religion, and of the character of its ministers.

It is probable, indeed, that some members who could not but discern a striking contrast between *their admonition* and those of the Apostles to the first churches, were overawed by the fear of seeming to give any countenance to a new class of preachers, whose exertions had offended the clergy in general. The suppression of lay preachers and catechists, being a common cause, was earnestly and unanimously desired by all parties, and, therefore, none of them were over-scrupulous in adopting measures which they fondly imagined would have a tendency to accomplish it.

The General Assembly infer the disloyalty of all Dissenters merely from their professing certain religious principles, which, although they are admitted to be unfriendly to the established church, have long ceased to be viewed in a criminal light by

many of his Majesty's loyal subjects, and by the civil power itself. Dissenters from the national church are not connived at; they are *tolerated by Act of Parliament.* But no government can be supposed to tolerate that which is in its own nature a clear proof of hostility against the State. On the other hand, it is pleasant to recollect that the principles of established churchmen, the intolerance of which, and their disloyalty in certain cases, have been so fully evinced by the pastoral admonition, can only operate against the civil power in circumstances which do not now exist. The Church of Scotland has been long in the peaceable possession of an ecclesiastical establishment; and at this moment it remains unchallenged and unimpaired by any effort of external violence. Other parties who may have formerly envied her, are now, it is thought, more disposed to allow her to retain her birthright, if she does not attempt to persecute. But let it be observed, that this opinion is founded on their having forsaken, in some measure, those tenets in the religious system of their fathers, which led them to fight for the establishment of Presbytery, and made it impossible for them to bear a rival, or even to tolerate those who differed from them, and who wished to live in peace.

Such evils have frequently arisen from confounding the kingdom of Christ with the kingdoms of this world. And the loyalty of churchmen, who feel an interest in supporting ecclesiastical establishments, is sometimes founded more upon the state of the times, than upon any solid religious principle. But churches formed on the plan of those which in Judea were in Christ Jesus, as they have no wish to participate in the honours or emoluments of the state, nor to employ its power and influence in propagating their religion, are in no danger of fighting against it. Can it be supposed that any man in his senses will hazard his life in order to obtain for himself and his party, that which he considers as a real evil? Or will he use violence for the purpose of exterminating false religion, while he is deeply convinced that nothing could more essentially injure the cause of true religion? Is it not perfectly clear that, before he can follow such practices, he must change his principles, or resolve to act in direct opposition to them? Let the truth then be fairly admitted, which is, that the principles maintained in the *Discourse* and in this *Vindication*, secure the loyalty of those who hold them; and will never, in any possible case, excite sedition against the civil powers, how adverse soever they may be to the authority of ecclesiastical rulers, who on that account are not much disposed to do them justice. Such find it easier to misrepresent, than to refute them.

From these hints, and from the sentiments contained in the

foregoing discourse, the public will judge whether the author and his religious friends ought to be considered as movers of sedition. And he has no doubt that all candid persons, except political clergymen and their partisans, will honourably acquit them of this illiberal and groundless charge.

END OF APPENDIX.

LETTERS ON A VARIETY OF SUBJECTS,

RELATING CHIEFLY TO

CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP AND CHURCH ORDER.

"HIM shall ye hear *in all things* whatsoever HE shall say unto you."—ACTS iii. 22.

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INTRODUCTION.

The following Letters were intended for the *Theological Repository*, in which several of them have been already published. The Letters themselves will show the design of writing on the different subjects which come under review; and, if the task be properly executed, a more necessary one could not have been performed.

Some of the controverted points, which the reader, I trust, will find impartially examined, have not hitherto been so carefully or so amply investigated, as their importance seems to require. In former times, they were but little, if at all disputed. And several publications of the present day, relating to those points, are more remarkable for their novelty, and for the thoughtless and positive manner in which their authors depreciate institutions formerly venerated by the fearers of God, than for their close attention, either to the doctrine of the Scriptures, or to the just principles of reason.

The same subjects form part of those considered in a late publication of another class of professing Christians, from whose ancient writings I have learned many things in relation to the simple doctrine of the Gospel, and the nature of the kingdom of Christ.

When so many favourite sentiments are called in question, some of them held and propagated by the leaders of numerous bodies, with a degree of zeal which generally accompanies new and distinguishing tenets, there can be no rational hope of escaping censure. If that censure be founded on the authority of Divine precepts, or of the approved example of the apostolic churches, it will be entitled to great attention and respect, from whatever

quarter it may come. But if it rest on no better reasoning than has yet appeared, like all other fruitless controversy, it will deserve to be treated with neglect. "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."—Isa. viii. 20.

The principles chiefly considered have a relation to some of the ordinances of the Lord Jesus Christ, delivered by himself personally, or by his inspired Apostles, that they might be transmitted from age to age, and never cease to be observed until he come again.

It cannot be the privilege of nations called Christian, the bulk of whom are "uncircumcised in heart and ears," to keep those ordinances which were intended for persons "sanctified in Christ Jesus," and separated from the world as "God's holy nation and his peculiar people, that they should show forth the praises of him who hath called them out of darkness unto his marvellous light." It is not more necessary that the institutions of the kingdom of Christ should be the same in substance and in form as they were in the primitive age, than it is that they should be observed by persons of the same description as those who first enjoyed them.

What are ordinances, aside from the glorious truth revealed in the Gospel? Nothing but unmeaning outward ceremonies, "a form of godliness" put on by those who "deny the power thereof;" which, instead of profiting the carnal worshipper, must aggravate his guilt and condemnation. It is not, therefore, my intention to recommend Divine institutions, how devoutly soever they might externally be observed, to all sorts of professing Christians, nor to any church or society in which the people of God are knowingly mixed with unbelievers. The Lord's promise of dwelling and walking even among those congregations which are gathered solely by the influence of the saving truth, and his owning them as "his sons and daughters," are connected with their coming out from among false worshippers, and being separate as the temple of the living God. 2 Cor. vi. 16—18. And they have reason to expect the enjoyment of those high privileges, only when they keep the ordinances as they were delivered to the first churches.

The persons with whom I mean to expostulate, are those who have been taught of God "to believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God, and who, believing, have life through his name;" those who are fully persuaded that the work by which the ungodly are justified, was completely performed when Jesus said "*It is finished*," and that "there is no other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved." Having thus obtained mercy, they "are constrained by the love of Christ to live not unto themselves, but unto him who died for them and rose again." These are "the true circumcision, who worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh;" of whom the faithful witness hath said, "*the Father seeketh such to worship him*." They are taught not only "to call Jesus Lord," but "to do the will of his Father who is in heaven."

If the sentiments here expressed should be thought inconsistent with those contained in Letters I. and IV., my defence is, that they who appear to know the truth which flesh and blood cannot reveal, are the proper subjects of every Divine ordinance. And the principle which forbids our discerning or acknowledging such persons, while they are not in scriptural churches, seems to prohibit our teaching any to observe the institutions of Christ who are not already taught!

The Letters therefore must be considered as addressed to "all them who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity," not excluding those of them who are yet in captivity with the daughter of Babylon, and in many respects ignorant of "the liberty wherewith Christ hath made them free." To all such, by whatever names they may be distinguished, I wish "that grace and peace may be multiplied, through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord."

At the same time, I may be permitted to remind those in antichristian churches "who tremble at the Word of God," that there is no safety but in the way of "his judgments, which are true and righteous altogether; more to be desired than gold, yea, than much fine gold." Let them hear the warning voice from heaven, "Come out of her my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her

plagues; for her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities."—Rev. xvii. 4, 5. And when they "flee out of the midst of Babylon, and deliver every man his soul," let them beware lest, in the overstrained rapidity of their flight, they should run beyond the land of Israel, and perish in some waste and howling wilderness. There are no insurmountable barriers between the opposite extremes of superstition and infidelity.

Edinburgh, February 2, 1803.

LETTERS ON CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP, &c

I.—VISIBLE CHRISTIANITY.

While much light is spreading in relation to the pure and simple doctrine of the Gospel, the nature of the kingdom of heaven, and the ordinances which were delivered to the first churches by the inspired Apostles, it is matter of deep regret that many of those who know and love the truth, having seen the evil of antichristian doctrine and worship, run to an opposite extreme, and while they wish to avoid one evil, inadvertently fall into another. The truth of this remark could be supported by many instances; but I mean only to take notice of those which have been lately advanced by certain writers in the *Theological Repository*. They are the following:—

I. Against the visible Christianity of all who are not members of pure churches.

II. Against the expectation of any extensive conversion of Jews and Gentiles.

III. Against praying and praising with unbelievers.

IV. On eating the Lord's Supper without elders.

V. The same on the nature of the elder's office.

I intend to notice these subjects in their order. At present one shall suffice.

First, It is said, "How can we distinguish the people of God from the bulk of those antichristian parties with whom they stand connected, while they remain in full communion with them? It is one thing to admit the melancholy truth, that some of God's people are held captive in spiritual Babylon; but it is another thing to assume the authority of pronouncing and owning any particular persons as such, while they remain in the antichristian connexion."

No Divine ordinance has been more corrupted than that of baptism, nor has there ever been contrived a more powerful engine for maintaining and perpetuating the influence of the Man of Sin in the nations called Christian, than introducing the infant seed of those nations into what they call the visible church, and thus making Christians of all who breathe! Yet Sandemanians, or at least some among them, are reckoned by such as Christian brethren, although they are zealous advocates for infant baptism, and carry the matter so far as to pronounce all who deny that doctrine, self-righteous, and ignorant of the Gospel! Is this a crime consistent with discipleship, only in one or two of those numerous classes into which the professing disciples of Christ are divided? Or is the profanation of the Lord's Supper a stronger evidence of a false profession of Christianity than the profanation of the ordinance of baptism?

Now here is a wonderful thing, which may check every disposition to glorying in men—a class of people making the loudest possible cry against the delusions of antichrist, yet giving countenance to his most capital device for making whole nations false and nominal Christians, and unchristianizing all who follow an opposite practice! And some, while they condemn the baptism of the nations, and are incapable of perceiving one real Christian in spiritual Babylon, yet acknowledge as such those who contend earnestly for the corruption of a Divine ordinance, which perhaps, more than any thing else, supports the tottering throne of antichrist! If one would be consistent in the principle with respect to visible Christianity, he ought to acknowledge none as true believers except those who are perfectly agreed with himself, both in doctrine and in practice. I am doubtful if many of us could stand to be tried by such a test. I suppose that many of us neglect some things which Jesus Christ hath commanded, and it becomes each of us narrowly to examine his own heart and conduct, and then we will be more cautious of judging others.

It is "admitted that the people of God are in antichristian societies, but denied that they can be known or distinguished there." Are there, then, no great and leading things in which the disciples of Christ in every age have been agreed? Or are the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith, though essential to the character of every one who is born of God, yet less characteristic of true disciples, than separation from the world in religious worship, and a scrupulous attention to all the outward forms which we see exemplified in the first churches? For my own part, I am not only persuaded that the Lord's people are in national churches, and in the Church of Rome

itself, but that they are all one in the faith of Jesus, and in subjection to his authority as the king of Zion, so far as they know his will. To that extent they hear the voice of the good shepherd, and follow him. Although their unlawful connexion with false worshippers must be hurtful to them in many respects, yet it cannot be affirmed of them that "they worship the beast, or his image, or receive his mark in their foreheads, or in their hands;" for all such "shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God." They know, in some essential and leading particulars, the spiritual nature of Christ's kingdom; they love one another for the truth's sake; and they bring forth the fruits of righteousness.

That the peculiar institutions of the kingdom of heaven, and all things which have any relation to the acceptable service of God in his churches, are of great importance, and highly necessary for the edification and comfort of the people of God, will, I trust, ever be maintained by me. But the question is, whether are those great and radical things by which all the people of God are distinguished from the world, or the things by which they are distinguished from one another, of comparatively higher importance in themselves, and more essential to the true character of a Christian? If the preference in both respects must be given to the privileges which all Christians actually do enjoy, why should we, in judging those who are entitled to be reckoned such, make no account in this respect of all that is essential to true Christianity, and condemn some as false professors because they want other evidences which we acknowledge are not possessed by all the real disciples of Christ?

To admit that there are many believers in churches not formed according to the primitive model, while it is maintained that we cannot know them, seems to throw a reflection on Christianity itself. What! is there nothing to distinguish the people of God from those who are dead in sins, ignorant of the way of salvation through Jesus Christ, and walking according to the course of this world? Does the Gospel produce no visible effects on a great number of those who believe it, and trust in Christ for deliverance from the wrath to come? Then it would follow that the Gospel is not "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth!" That there are doubtful characters, both in scriptural churches and out of them, no person who knows the truth will deny. But to lay it down as a general rule, that, throughout all the widely extended dominions of antichrist, the true children of God are utterly unknown to their brethren who have come out of Babylon, or to one another, is to affirm that, in very many instances, the Gospel, although believed, produces no fruit by which it can

appear to have come to those persons " not in word only, but in power, and in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance !"

It will be admitted, not only that the Lord's people are scattered, and many of them mixed with the world in antichristian societies, but also that in the purest churches there are some hypocrites and false professors. This being the case, how can it be supposed that the outward observance of all the ordinances which Christ has appointed, warrants us to acknowledge a person as a believer, although he should be considerably deficient in other respects; and that we are not at liberty to form the same judgment of another who gives many evidences of love to the truth, while he remains not fully instructed with respect to the nature of Christ's kingdom and the ordinances observed by the first churches ? Such a rule of judging has an evil influence in churches. It tends to lull them in fatal security, to make them glory over all other professors as ignorant of true Christianity, and to reckon themselves in safety because they are in a pure church. Nor is it possible to avoid the dangerous state of mind to which I have alluded, while we say any thing which implies that " We are the people, and that wisdom shall die with us."

The Apostles of our Lord could say, in relation to themselves and their brethren in the churches, " We are of God," —and of all others, without exception, " The whole world lieth in wickedness." But surely it would betray the highest pride and arrogance, were any class of churches now in existence to hold the same language. Why ? Because the children of God have been scattered, and many of them are now to be found among a great variety of parties less or more antichristian. Of this we are perfectly assured by the prophecies in Scripture concerning the influence of *the Man of Sin*, on true as well as false professors ; by the call to the people of God " to come out of Babylon" before her complete destruction ; and by what we see every day passing before our eyes.

It may be proper to remark, that with respect to national churches, and other corrupt societies in which the people of God are mixed with the world, where also they give countenance to the profanation of Divine ordinances, and neglect many of the laws and institutions of the kingdom of heaven ; I ask no indulgence. I intend only to plead the cause of individual believers who have been misled and enslaved by the Man of Sin. The Pharisees, as a body, were strongly and repeatedly condemned by our Lord Jesus Christ. But that did not hinder individuals among them from being acknowledged as believers. To this class, I presume, belonged old Simeon, Anna the

prophetess, Joseph, Mary, Zacharias, Elizabeth, Nathanael, Joseph of Arimathea, and many others. Has this any tendency to lessen our abhorrence of the sect of the Pharisees?

To affirm that the people of God in Babylon cannot be distinguished from the world lying in wickedness, is the same with denying that any of them are in Babylon. Facts contradict this assertion; for a great proportion of those who are now in churches, walking agreeably to the rule of the New Testament, were known to some of the brethren in those churches as the disciples of Jesus, while they were yet in antichristian societies. And finally, it will be admitted, that when we treat other professors with contempt and scorn, we do not take the best method to show that we ourselves are the followers of the meek and lowly Jesus.

EDINBURGH, SEPT. 17, 1807.

II.—THE SALVATION OF JEWS AND GENTILES.

HAVING stated in a former Letter my sentiments in relation to visible Christianity, I now proceed:—

Second, To give my views in opposition to what has been advanced against the expectation of any extensive conversion of Jews and Gentiles.

It is said the common expectation of the general conversion of the Jews as a nation, together with an universal conversion of the Gentiles throughout all nations of the world, and of worldly prosperity and glory attending the Christian profession, appears like reviving the Jewish sentiment of the carnal nature of the Messiah's kingdom.

I plead solely and exclusively, however, for that sort of conversion which we see exemplified in the Apostles of our Lord, Mary Magdalene, Zaccheus, the thief on the cross, &c., during the personal ministry of Jesus; and three thousand souls on the day of Pentecost, the people of Samaria, the Eunuch, persecuting Saul, Lydia and her household, the Jailer and his household, and a multitude of other persons, during the ministry of the Apostles. With respect to a national conversion, there is no such thing warranted in the Scriptures; and wherever it has taken place, I consider it as a false profession of Christianity. The same remark applies to universal conversion; and as to worldly prosperity and glory attending the Christian profession, I can conceive nothing more opposite to

the doctrine of the New Testament, though it is perfectly consistent with that doctrine that "the churches should have rest, and be edified and multiplied, while they walk in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit."

The Scriptures give reason to expect that there will be an extensive spread of the Gospel, and that the Lord will yet "visit the nations, to take out of them a people for his name,"—multitudes both of Jews and Gentiles; and that this will be produced by the success of the pure Gospel, which was first preached by the inspired Apostles.

There are many promises in the Word of God relating to the extent of the Redeemer's kingdom, and the salvation of men of all nations, which have not yet been fully accomplished. This, however, is so wide a field, that I cannot propose to enter upon it, with a view to a full discussion of even the leading passages of Scripture which relate to this subject. But I shall make a few remarks, first, upon general prophecies, and second, upon some of those which point directly to times succeeding the apostolic age.

1. It is the opinion of many, that because some of the Old Testament prophecies which speak in universal terms concerning the success of the Gospel among the Gentiles, have been quoted by the Apostles as fulfilled in their day, therefore we have little more to expect. The following text had its accomplishment in the preaching of Paul and Barnabas, "I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldst be for salvation to the ends of the earth," Acts xiii. 47. Paul affirms of the first ministers of the Word, Rom. x. 18, that "their sound went into all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world," &c. And he declares, Rom. xvi. 26, that the Gospel which he preached was, at that time, by "the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith." Therefore say they who are afraid of a liberal explanation of the prophecies, they were fulfilled when the Apostles preached the Gospel throughout the greater part of the Roman empire, then termed the world, and sometimes all the world.

That the preaching of the inspired Apostles was a most glorious fulfilment of the former prophecies concerning the calling of the Gentiles, and the groundwork of all that was to be done in succeeding ages, admits of no doubt. But happy is it for the nations, and for us in the isles and the uttermost ends of the earth, that the great things contained in those prophecies were not then exhausted. Had they received at that time a full accomplishment, the Gospel could not have been preached to any other nation after the death of the Apostles; nay, it fol-

lows also that, from that period to the second coming of Christ, no wretched outcast among the other Gentile nations could have been saved.

Is there any reason why we may not conclude with the utmost certainty, that there was in the time of the Apostles a begun accomplishment of the prophecies now under consideration, which was to go on from age to age, and to be completed only when the mystery of God should be finished? And have we not also good grounds to believe that the unlimited expressions made use of in many prophecies, have a respect to the calling of God's people out of every nation without exception? If the Gospel shall never be preached to one-fifth of the nations, how then can it be said that the innumerable company before the throne of God in heaven, came out of "all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues?" Is it not more natural to think that so many descriptive words are used for the very purpose of ascertaining this event, and of rendering it sure and unquestionable? That the prophecies relating to the calling of the Gentiles were completely fulfilled by the personal ministry of the Apostles, is therefore a sentiment equally erroneous, and unfriendly to the salvation of men; though something nearly amounting to this is held by many.

2. Besides those prophecies which foretel, in general and very extensive terms, the salvation of the people of God among all nations, from the coming of Christ to the end of time, there are others, both in the Old and New Testament, which have a more peculiar respect to times succeeding the apostolic age; and some of them, particularly those in the New Testament, cannot be otherwise explained, without putting upon them a forced and unnatural meaning. The Apostles foretold, not only the coming of the Man of Sin, but his gradual consumption and his final overthrow, the resurrection of the witnesses, and the consequent preaching of the Gospel to the nations. These events were not to be accomplished while the Apostles lived, for the Man of Sin was to have dominion over the nations twelve hundred and sixty years. But here again, too wide a field opens for discussion, and I must therefore confine myself to a few remarks.

It is said that Paul, in the Epistle to the Romans, chap. xi., does not affirm a future conversion of the Jews as a nation; for he says, "And they also, IF they abide not still in unbelief, shall be graffed in."

It would be easy to produce many other passages of Scripture where the word *if* is used so as to denote the certainty of the thing supposed. Thus—"*If* I have told you of earthly things, and ye believe not—*If* we believe that Jesus died and

rose again—*If* our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved—*If* so be that, being clothed, we shall not be found naked—*If* God spared not the natural branches—*If* thou wert cut out of the olive-tree which was wild by nature," &c.

The *if* here is not meant to express a doubt, and far less a denial of the thing supposed. Would the Apostle have made a supposition of that which never can take place, and yet with the same breath affirm that God is able to accomplish it? And would he not have plainly asserted the fact, if it was a fact, that very few of the Jews were to be converted at any future period, instead of hesitating upon it, as if he were uncertain whether any of his countrymen would ever be called to the faith of the Gospel?

In verses 25, 26, of the same chapter, it is said, "That blindness in part is happened unto Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in; and so all Israel shall be saved." I shall not take it upon me absolutely to affirm that it is wrong to consider the *all Israel* who shall be saved, not as the temporal seed of Abraham merely, but all the people of God, whether Jews or Gentiles, though it seems likely that *all Israel* means exclusively, as in the preceding verse, the seed of Jacob; not every individual among them, but many in comparison of the remnant when the Apostle wrote, and the very small number of them who have since obtained salvation through Christ. In this restricted sense, the word *all* is very frequently used in Scripture. For instance, "The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and *all flesh* shall see it together."—"There went out unto him (i. e. John the Baptist) *all the land of Judea*, and they of Jerusalem, and were *all* baptised of him in the river of Jordan."—"I will pour out of my spirit upon *all flesh*." But it is farther asserted, that "the blindness, which happened in part to typical Israel, will remain in that nation until the fulness of the redeemed of all nations be come in;" which I understand to mean, that the same extent of blindness described throughout this chapter shall continue to the end of time.

If this be a just explanation, I cannot see why the Apostle should have immediately added, "And so all Israel shall be saved; as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob; for this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins." If there were no salvation for the blinded Israelites, how then could the Apostle make this remark upon what he had said, "And so all Israel shall be saved?" For although that expression should include the whole of the redeemed company, which is doubtful, yet it must have a peculiar respect to the people of God among the Jews, for of them the Apostle was

treating, and the text quoted by him from Isaiah lix., has an immediate reference to the sons of Jacob, and to God's covenant with them.

What then are we to understand by their blindness continuing "until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in?" It appears, from many things in this chapter, that the salvation of God which came to the Gentiles through the fall of the Jews, was to continue almost exclusively with the former, till their separate fulness, or that fulness in which the Jews did not participate, termed "the fulness of the Gentiles," should be completed. And then the blindness of many Jews was to be removed, and they were to become partakers of free salvation through Christ, receiving it from the Gentiles, as the Gentiles had formerly received it from them. But not to the exclusion of the Gentiles; for the Apostle addressing them says, "That through your mercy they (the Jews) also may obtain mercy," verse 31. And this wonderful display of boundless, free, and sovereign mercy towards all, Jews and Gentiles, is the ground of the sublime exclamation which immediately follows. He likewise affirms that the fulness of the Jews shall be the riches of the world, much more than was their fall and their diminishing; and that the receiving of them shall be life from the dead.

Edinburgh, October 15, 1807.

III.—THE SALVATION OF JEWS AND GENTILES.

The subject of my last Letter was the conversion of Jews and Gentiles; and I request your indulgence while I pursue it a little further.

It seems necessary, first of all, to remark, that something very awful is intended by the stumbling and fall of the Jews, in conformity to ancient prophecies, some of which are quoted, ver. 8—10. This fall is expressed by other terms, such as, the diminishing of them; the casting away of them; the branches being broken off; God's severity in not sparing them; their blindness, unbelief, and enmity against the Gospel. And although the Apostle says, "blindness *in part*," yet he does not mean a few persons, or a small part of Israel; for a very great proportion of them were blinded at that time, and afterwards nearly the whole of them.

This melancholy description of the state of the Jewish people, was not fully applicable to their situation while the

Word of God had success among them as among the Gentiles. Saving a numerous remnant, which had been chosen according to "the election of grace," the great body of the nation remained the most avowed enemies of the cross of Christ, and now "wrath was come upon them to the uttermost." After this period they were entirely broken off; the salvation of God was sent from them to the Gentiles, and has continued among the latter to this day, scarcely one Jew in a whole age having been in any country converted to the Christian faith.

Now the question is, Whether was this eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Romans written with an intention to show that the Jews would be thus excluded from salvation to the end of time, or to give hope concerning them at a future period? One would think that the most cursory reader would at once perceive in it the casting away of the Jews as an awful warning to Gentile Christians, the subserviency of the fall of the Jews to the salvation of the Gentiles, and a clear revelation that a time shall come when the Jews shall partake of the mercy of the Gentiles, and be in all respects on a footing with them in relation to the blessings of the everlasting Gospel.

Does not the Apostle intimate "the fulness of the Jews?" And surely no one can think that they were then enjoying that fulness, when he was lamenting their fall and their diminishing, or that any event since that time could be so denominated. Does he not likewise affirm, that the receiving of them shall be life from the dead; that they shall "be graffed in; that all Israel shall be saved; that the Deliverer shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob; that as, touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes; that as the Gentiles in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through the unbelief of the Jews, even so have these also now not believed, that through the mercy displayed in the salvation of the Gentiles, they also may obtain mercy; and that God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he may have mercy upon all?"

How shall we explain *having mercy upon all?* Not surely all the Jews without exception? Not every individual of the human race? But shall we likewise say, that few or none of that nation are immediately in view, of whom the Apostle affirms that "God hath concluded them all (or shut them all up together) in unbelief;" not that all may be condemned, but that he may have mercy upon all?" The least that we can justly say of this universal expression is, that it places the Jews precisely on the same footing with the Gentile nations, and that its accomplishment shall put an end to the exclusion of the temporal seed of Abraham from the blessings of Messiah's kingdom.

Four distinct eras are noted in the Scriptures, respecting

the promulgation and influence of the truth of God revealed in his Word.

1. During the long period of four thousand years after the creation of the world, the true knowledge of God was almost wholly confined to one particular race of men, originally the descendents of Seth, the son of Adam; afterwards those of Shem, the son of Noah; and then the temporal seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob;—the whole of these being the descendents of Seth. This continued till about eight years after the resurrection of Jesus, until which period the Gospel was preached to the Jews only.

2. The Gentiles were then called, and became fellow-heirs with the Jews of all the blessings of God's kingdom. The joint participation of Jews and Gentiles seems to have continued, at the utmost, only about thirty years.

3. The Jews, because of their unbelief, were broken off, and then the diminishing of the Jews became the riches of the world, and the Gentile nations obtained exclusively the blessings of the Gospel. Under this era, which has continued more than seventeen hundred years, we now live, enjoying that fulness of the Gentiles, in which the Jews do not participate.

4. Another era is yet to come, when, "through the mercy of the Gentiles, the Jews shall obtain mercy, and when God, who hath concluded them all in unbelief, shall have mercy upon all," making no distinction between Jew and Gentile.

Let it be observed, however, that at no time has any class of mankind been absolutely excluded. During the first era some Gentiles were saved; and during the third, which now exists, some Jews have been, and now are, partakers of salvation. In both cases the exclusion has been general, but not universal.

Divine sovereignty appears in the whole procedure; and in the event expected, during the fourth era, it will be displayed as it was in the second era; for these two are precisely the same in nature, whatever they may be in their comparative extent.

Notwithstanding the length of this discussion, I feel it incumbent on me, before concluding this letter, solemnly to warn the disciples of Jesus against that state of mind which makes them slow to believe the prophecies relating to the extent of the Redeemer's kingdom.

It is remarkable that some Gentile Christians now show a disposition towards the Jews, similar to that which, in the apostolic age, the Jews manifested towards the Gentiles, namely, a dislike to their salvation. And it is truly mortifying to reflect, that the greater number of those who indulge this state of

mind, are persons much instructed in the knowledge of the Gospel, and of the things concerning the kingdom of God. They call it *a Jewish notion*, to expect an extensive influence of the Word of God among all nations. The very opposite is the fact; for the Apostle Paul, describing his countrymen, says, "They please not God, and are contrary to all men, forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles, that they might be saved." And even believing Jews were not very willing to acknowledge the first Gentile converts, and were surprised when they heard that "God had also granted to the Gentiles repentance unto life." But the Apostle thus describes the spirit by which he regulated his own conduct: "I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved;" recommending this example to his fellow Christians; for he adds, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ."

The freeness of Divine grace, its sovereignty, its opposition to the most darling inclinations of the human heart, the spiritual and heavenly nature of Christ's kingdom—all these have been used as arguments against the conversion of the Jews, or any signal prosperity of the Gospel among the Gentiles! And they whose hearts' desire and prayer to God for Israel, and for the nations, is, that they may be saved, are accused, as I formerly hinted, of ignorance of the Gospel, and of wishing to see a corrupt faith prevail, especially if they dare to express a hope that their prayers will be answered! Such arguments cannot be rendered plausible by the utmost extent of human ingenuity. For what is all this but to set the Gospel in opposition to itself? Will the purest and simplest views that can be entertained of the truth concerning Jesus, have any tendency to make us less concerned about the salvation of men, and more anxious to darken the things revealed in the Scriptures concerning the success of the Gospel among all nations? No, let us beware of imputing to the Gospel a state of mind which so ill accords with its genuine influence, and which can only arise from prejudice, and from mistaken views of Messiah's kingdom. That glorious kingdom, instead of dying away, as some have supposed, like an expiring lamp, before the advent of its eternal King, "shall break in pieces, and consume all opposing kingdoms, and shall stand for ever;" although its own subjects, acting consistently, use no carnal weapons.

There may be among real Christians erroneous views of many prophecies, scarcely any of which, I believe, are fully understood till they are accomplished. But to make it a criterion of possessing the faith of Jesus, that we should be extremely scrupulous about admitting that any considerable

number of either Jews or Gentiles shall be converted, as in the days of the Apostles, is to me beyond expression wonderful. Did not the grace of the Most High appear in all its freeness and sovereignty, when he saved three thousand Jews on the day of Pentecost, as well as when one Ethiopian received the truth, and went on his way rejoicing? Did he not equally appear as the sovereign Lord of all, in exercising the most awful and just severity towards the Jews, when because of unbelief they were broken off, and in displaying infinite goodness towards the Gentiles, when in much superior numbers they were graffed in? Upon what ground, then, is Divine sovereignty considered as an insuperable bar in the way of restoring to the Jewish people the privileges of the Gentiles, and of teaching "*all nations* to call Jesus blessed, that the whole "earth may be filled with his glory?"

EDINBURGH, OCTOBER 15, 1807.

IV.—ON PRAYING WITH UNBELIEVERS.

I NOW intend to offer some remarks on praying and praising with unbelievers.

III.—It is asserted that "Christians ought not to join with any people in prayer and praise, but with those whom they admit and receive to partake with them in the Lord's Supper."

The sentiment here expressed is not unconnected with the other subjects which I have already considered; and, on that account, I request the attention of my readers to my former Letters, especially the first, as I shall not, in this letter, give any particular description of visible believers.

It is not said how far it is intended to carry the prohibition, except that we ought only to join in prayer and praise with those with whom we partake of the Lord's Supper. Here there is no room left for any difference about whether we shall esteem this or that person a Christian; for we must reckon all who are not members of our own church unbelievers, or, at least, treat them in all respects as if they were such. But is it meant that no unbelievers, or, in other words, none but church members, are to be allowed access to the place where we worship God? For, undoubtedly, some of them will pray and praise with us, though we should not invite them to do so, nor say any thing on our part which would sanction that practice; and surely we will not advise to forbid men to call upon the name of the Lord! This would be opposite not only to 1 Cor.

xiv. 23—25, but to the whole current of Divine revelation; nor does the law of our country permit the exclusion of hearers.

I must therefore suppose that it is meant to place unbelievers in an adjoining room, within hearing, or to have them visibly separated from the church, if they be admitted into the same room—a mode of worship lately adopted by Mr Walker of Dublin, and those who adhere to or have been taught by him. I have not yet heard of any person going farther than this; far enough indeed it certainly is.

It appears to me, that making such a distinction as I now suppose, with that degree of strictness and formality which the object in view seems to require, would have the air of saying, "Stand by, I am holier than thou." This indeed, I am afraid, would be the only effect produced by it; for if hearers did come after making the above arrangement, they would still join with us. Some of them would not admit the charge of being unbelievers, though we should plainly declare every one of them to be such; others would worship from mere education and custom, let us say what we will; and if it be meant only, that whatever they may do, we should not consider ourselves as joining with them, that is equally in our power whether there be any visible distinction or not.

The case is different in relation to the Lord's Supper, which, in various respects, has been improperly ranked with prayer and praise, so far as relates to fellowship and joint communion. In the nature of the thing, we cannot partake of the Lord's Supper without being visibly separated from those who are not church members; and no one can have fellowship with us in that ordinance, to whom we do not give the bread and the wine.

If the matter in question be a part of the order of churches, where is the Scripture rule for it? Conclusions drawn from passages which solemnly enjoin upon Christians purity of communion in general terms, may be carried too far. A particular precept or example therefore seems requisite, or at least would be highly satisfactory. The Apostle Paul supposes that unbelievers would come into the Christian assembly at Corinth; but not a word does he say about a separate place being assigned to them. On the contrary, he expresses himself in such a way as would naturally lead a simple reader to conclude that those unbelievers went in among the Christians, if they were so inclined. Nay, some of the first churches proceeded so far as to follow the practice of the polite world, saying to a man who came into their assembly with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, or gay clothing, "Sit thou here in a good place; and to a poor man in vile raiment, Stand thou there, or sit here under

my footstool." The Apostle James strongly condemns this *partiality* in the house of God; but evidently gives them to understand that they did their duty as Christians, if they gave a seat or a stance (as it might happen) indiscriminately to rich or poor, whether it were *here*, i. e. close by the person who gave the invitation; or *there*, i. e. at some little distance, or, for want of better accommodation, *under one of their footstools*. See James ii. 1—10.*

It is worthy of remark, because the wisdom of God appears

* Mr Walker of Dublin, in a late *Essay*, has affirmed that the rich and the poor men were Christian brethren, a sentiment which I would have anticipated had I imagined that it could have been entertained by so respectable an opponent.

To suppose that members of the primitive churches came into their assemblies like strangers, not knowing where to find a seat, is extremely unnatural. Every one must have had free access to any accommodation which the place of meeting afforded. And if they had been partial among themselves in this respect, there would still have been less occasion to point out a good seat to a rich man. He would have stepped boldly forward to the distinguished place which was considered as his right.

Besides, "a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, or gay clothing," would have shown the same attachment to vanity, extravagance, and pride, which is condemned in the female sex, 1 Tim. ii., 1 Pet. iii., and he surely would not have escaped censure on that account, if he had been a member of a church of Christ. He was, on the contrary, one of those covetous, persecuting, and impious rich men, who seem to have been occasional hearers in the churches of the twelve tribes; for those wicked men are addressed and warned of the awful judgments which awaited them, James v. 1—7, a very unusual thing in the apostolic epistles. And they are described in the same manner, in order to show how absurd it was to be partial towards them in the house of God, "Do not rich men oppress you and draw you before the judgment seats? Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by which ye are called?" chap. ii. 6, 7. Such oppressors might sometimes attend their public meetings for the very purpose of accusing them; at other times, from curiosity, or from partial conviction.

Again, "a poor man in vile raiment," might not be to blame for his poverty. But his appearance, as described by the Apostle, is too mean, abject, and beggarly, to admit of our supposing him a Christian brother, if there was a spark of love remaining in the church of which he was a member. Nor does it seem at all likely that they would say to a brother, "Sit here under my footstool." It would be far more reasonable to conclude, that this was a poor man, who had accidentally found his way into a Christian assembly.

The respect of persons censured by the Apostle James is none of the common civilities of life, which certainly may take place without despising the poor, or more highly esteeming the rich, merely on account of their worldly circumstances. It is that of showing any respect or preference in matters relating to the worship of God in his churches. And Mr Walker ought not to resist this solemn warning against partiality towards hearers in Christian assemblies, nor the fact clearly established by it—that unbelievers, during the time of public worship, sat or stood, on some occasions, close by the members of the church.

in permitting it, that their unchristian behaviour has been the occasion of transmitting to us so precise an account of the manner in which hearers were admitted into the first Christian assemblies. Thus we clearly perceive that the new plan of conducting public worship, does not accord with the example of the primitive churches. Specious arguments in favour of keeping all hearers at a respectful distance during the time of public worship, may display the ingenuity of a man of talents; may entertain the curious, and captivate lovers of novelty, and gratify the religious pride of the self-righteous. But they can have little weight with others, who admit no reasoning that does not correspond with the benevolent spirit of the Gospel, and with the unchallenged example of the apostolic churches.

Let it not be supposed, however, that there is no distinction between the disciples of Christ and the world, in the time of public worship. Wherever there is a church of Christ, the fact is known that a separate body of disciples is there assembled. They pray in that capacity for themselves, as individuals, and as a church; and they pray also, among other things, for unconverted sinners who come into their assembly; for the deliverance of the Lord's people from their captivity in mystical Babylon; and for their visible unity in the faith and obedience of the Gospel. It thus sufficiently appears that they worship God in a state of separation from the world. But any other line of distinction, with respect to public prayer, seems an attempt to be wise above that which is written; for there is nothing taught concerning it in all the Word of God.

1. Such as that of a preacher officiating in a place where he does not know that there are any believers to join with him in prayer and praise. There is a ground of scruple here, and as praise is certainly not essential to the preaching of the Gospel, I should think it right in such circumstances to decline it. I am of a different opinion however about prayer, not from any express commandment or example in the New Testament, but on the broad ground of Christian principles, by which many things must be determined.

Those preachers who know the obduracy of the human heart, the impossibility of doing any good by preaching unless the hand of the Lord be with them, and their own insufficiency to make manifest the truth as it should be spoken, will, in all cases, feel the necessity of praying to God for his countenance, direction, and blessing. If this is not done in public, have those who hear him any reason to think that the preacher has all his dependence upon God, who alone giveth the increase of his own Word, when he refuses to pray in their presence for the influences of the Holy Spirit, with respect either to himself or

to those whom he addresses? There is in this an appearance at least of self-confidence, and of a careless state of mind in relation to obtaining Divine aid, when endeavouring to speak the words of eternal life to perishing sinners. And if the preacher should attempt to excuse himself, by informing his auditory that he has no scriptural ground to consider any of them as believers, would they not say, with truth, that he has the more need to pray for them?

It will seldom happen in this country, that a public preacher has just reason to conclude that all his hearers are unbelievers. But, granting that it were so, is there any prohibition in the Word of God against praying in their presence? That they only can pray with acceptance, who come to the throne of grace in the name of our great high priest, Jesus the Son of God, and that Christians cannot consistently join with any other persons in the duty of prayer, I fully admit; but how can it be supposed by any disciple of Jesus, that he sins against God by praying for all men, and in the hearing of as many as come to listen to the truth of God which he declares, I cannot easily conceive.

2. Private Christians, as well as public teachers, may be called, or may of their own accord go, to visit a person on his death-bed, and to set before him that which the Gospel reveals as the hope of dying sinners. I shall suppose that the sick person has made no profession of Christianity; that his conscience is alarmed; that he is extremely anxious to find relief and consolation; and that, after hearing all that his visiter can say about the glad tidings of salvation, he still remains in deep distress, and earnestly entreats him to pray for him. Would such an one feel himself at liberty to refuse the dying man's request? What part of the Word of God, or what principle of the Gospel, would prevent him from praying for the salvation of a fellow sinner? Is it the design of the law of Christ, enjoining purity of communion, to shut up our bowels of compassion, and to make us unfriendly to the salvation of a wretched being trembling on the brink of eternity? Alas, how often do they who carry some things beyond the rule of the Word of God, thereby make void its most essential principles, and act opposite to the scope and spirit of the whole of Divine revelation!

3. A disciple of Christ may occasionally be in private houses where prayer is wont to be made, and where there are no members of his own church, nor of any church formed on the doctrine and practice of the Apostles. In this situation he may be asked to pray, or expected to bow the knee while another is so employed. If he have good reason to conclude that the company consists only of false professors, I shall by no means

object to his withdrawing respectfully; though I should reckon him highly to blame were he to fly off contemptuously. To this however I consent, not upon the ground of there being no church members in the company, far less because they are not all of that description, but because none of them appear to be believers of the truth, and because expressions might be used in prayer in which no real disciple of Christ could profess to join.

4. Another case must still be mentioned, which appears to me of equal importance to any of the former. A Christian who is the head of a family, has certain duties to perform in that capacity, and if he have a proper conviction of what is incumbent on him as a husband, a father, and a master, of his need of mercy, and of grace to help him at all times, of the innumerable bounties of Divine Providence, which are daily bestowed on him and his dependents, and that all his dear friends must either obtain salvation through Christ or perish for ever; he will have such a concern for himself and them as will lead him to pray daily to God, in the presence of his family, for all needful blessings, and to give thanks for mercies received. This is what may naturally be expected of all who are exercised to godliness, without entering minutely into the arguments for family prayer, which I have not room to state.

One of these, however, I cannot pass unnoticed. Christian parents are commanded "to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." It surely will not be maintained that they do so, if they fail to give them an example of the practical influence of the Gospel in their own conduct. Aside from this, they have no just reason to expect that their instructions and admonitions will be much regarded. They may teach their children the theory of religion, and among other things the nature of prayer, the blessings which we all need, and the only way in which any one can approach God with acceptance. But what will the children think of such instructions, if they are never witnesses to the prayers of those by whom they are so taught? Will it be possible for them to believe that such parents are seriously convinced of the truth of their own doctrine, or that they have any due impression of their own wants, their dependence upon God, their obligations to him, and the blessedness of enjoying fellowship with him, and a sense of his forgiving mercy through the atonement of his beloved Son?

Besides, how are Christian parents to expect a blessing on reading the Scriptures, on instructing, warning, and admonishing their families, on training their children to habits of virtue, and on endeavouring, amidst many imperfections, to set a proper example before them? Can they show that they depend upon

God for his blessing, if they do not acknowledge him and call upon his name?

When there are more believers than one in a family, there can be no doubt that daily social prayer is their duty and privilege. And let none plead exemption, merely because there are no church members with whom they can put up their joint petitions to the throne of grace, if they cannot, upon clear and Scriptural grounds, say that all their household are unbelievers. Even if it were so, there is no reason, surely, why a Christian should not pray for them, and in their hearing, though he cannot join with them in this solemn act of Divine worship; and if the adult part of his family will not hear him, at least his children will.

Would not the principle of exclusion lead the disciples of Christ to decline giving thanks to God for their food when there are unbelievers in the company, or at least when no church members are present? I earnestly beseech all the fearers of God who are scrupulous to this extent, to weigh the consequences of such procedure, and to examine the motives which lead to it. Do they think that God can be honoured by that which must strike every one as an evidence of total want of religion? Or can they believe that they show more regard than others to the peculiar precepts of Christianity, by eating their meat like the beasts that perish?

That which is morally good in its own nature is a bounden duty, although it should not be particularly commanded nor exemplified in the Word of God. But here there is no want of example. On various occasions the Lord of all, gave thanks for a common meal when surrounded by an unhallowed multitude who were miraculously fed by his bounty; and in recounting one of those miracles, the Evangelist remarks, that "they did eat bread, after that the Lord had given thanks," John vi. 23. The same practice was followed by the Apostle Paul before two hundred and seventy-five persons, of whom the far greater part were unbelievers and idolaters: "He gave thanks to God in presence of them all," Acts xxvii. 35.

Some will endeavour to excuse themselves in other respects, by saying, that "undoubtedly they are under an obligation to follow such examples; but not having the same express authority to pray in the presence of unbelievers, or in mixed companies at other times, Christians ought to decline it." Yet, I presume, they will not venture to affirm that it becomes them to be more devout at a common meal than when they are employed in using the means which God hath appointed for their own spiritual comfort, and for the conviction of their fellow-sinners. It would be strange, indeed, to suppose that the

disciples of Christ ought to be engaged in prayer and thanksgiving before unbelievers, in relation only to the meat which perisheth; or that any of them will consider the Lord's blessing on his Word, which communicates life to the soul, as less necessary than his blessing on the food, by which their bodies are nourished! All this, however, seems implied in refusing to pray for spiritual blessings, while placed in the same circumstances in which we pray for temporal mercies.

On other occasions also, Jesus prayed to his heavenly Father, in the hearing not only of his disciples, but of the unbelieving Jews. At one time he said, "Father, glorify thy name." At another time, "Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me;" and "it was his custom to go into the Jewish synagogue on the Sabbath-day," where undoubtedly he worshipped God. The same thing is affirmed of the Apostle Paul, namely, that, "as his manner was, he went into a synagogue of the Jews," where he too worshipped the God of Israel; for believing Jews had not yet been, by express revelation, forbidden to attend to the service of the temple. Paul says, in his answer to Tertullus, "There are yet but twelve days since I went up to Jerusalem for to worship, and they neither found me in the temple disputing with any man," &c., Acts xxiv. 11, 12. A full account of this worship of Paul in the temple is given, Acts xxi. 17—28. And finally, we are informed that "Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer," Acts iii. 1.

The instances which have been adduced, and others which might be mentioned, clearly show that the most faithful servants of the living God have approached him in prayer, singly and in a social manner, in circumstances not admitting of a visible distinction between believers and unbelievers.

It will appear, from what has been stated, that I distinguish between the Lord's Supper and prayer or praise, as matters of joint communion, for which I assign the following reasons:—

1. Two persons may join in prayer, but they cannot lawfully partake of the Lord's Supper, as I shall afterwards clearly evince.

2. Social prayer may take place, and ought to be attended to every day, when there is an opportunity for it. The Lord's Supper, on the contrary, can only be dispensed on the first day of the week, if we follow the example of the apostolic churches.

3. The disciples of Christ may jointly pour out their hearts to God in a private house, where there is no church, or on shipboard, or in the fields, and in all the various situations in which they may be placed. But, if we follow the primitive example, the Lord's Supper can only be administered to a con-

gregation united in the bond of Christian love, assembling regularly in one place, observing all the ordinances of the house of God, and attending to the law of discipline by which purity of communion is maintained. Thus it appears that the Lord's Supper is an ordinance peculiar to a church, and there only to be enjoyed. This, I presume, no one will affirm in relation to prayer and praise, either as personal or as social duties.

4. Prayer and praise are unquestionably the duty and privilege of all who are taught of God, and no person can be a Christian who does not "call on the name of the Lord, and give thanks to the Father, who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." I am not here going to deny that the Lord's Supper is likewise the duty and privilege of all Christians. But it is not their immediate duty while they remain in corrupt churches where that ordinance is profaned, nor until they join themselves to congregations of visible believers. Meanwhile, I scruple not to own that I have freedom to pray jointly with some who cannot, in their present circumstances, partake with me in the Lord's Supper. Not that I would refuse communion with them in any ordinance, would they accept of it in conformity to the irreversible law of the great Head of the church, who hath commanded, 1. "That men shall be taught or made disciples. 2. That those so taught shall be baptised. And, 3. That they shall be farther taught to observe all things whatsoever he hath commanded." Were I to have communion in the Lord's Supper with some whom I reckon disciples, I must, for their sakes, act in direct opposition to several things which are enforced by the authority of the King of Zion. But when I occasionally join with them in prayer, no such condition is required; I make no compromise with them, I yield no part of Divine truth, I break no commandment of our Lord and Saviour, unless it can be shown that he commands me to stand aloof from those whom he hath saved!

Here let us pause—and then ask whence it arises that any real disciple of Jesus should controvert all that I have now advanced, without attempting to prove, or professing to maintain, that all the children of God are now in churches resembling "those which in Judea were in Christ Jesus." I am afraid that the sentiments which I now combat, and others which give no evidence of a contrite and humble spirit, but have an evident tendency to perpetuate divisions among the people of God, will go far to establish two facts which have often appeared to me probable. 1. That there are no churches as yet fully delivered from the influence of the Man of Sin. And, 2. That

those of them who profess greater strictness, while they treat others with contempt who are less instructed in many things, may, after all their boasting, be as far from the primitive mode as some of those whom they unmercifully condemn, not merely as societies, but as individuals professing to have all their hope in the blessed Jesus.

Edinburgh, November 14, 1807.

V.—ON EATING THE LORD'S SUPPER WITHOUT ELDERS.

I shall now examine another strange doctrine maintained by a considerable number of persons, many of whom, I trust, have an ear to hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches, although they now seem uncommonly tenacious of their own opinion.

IV. Of all the objectionable schemes lately adopted by professing Christians, that of reducing a church of Christ to the number of two or three, and insisting that so small a company, admitting them to be disciples, may lawfully partake of the Lord's Supper, not only without elders, but, as I conceive, without a church, appears to me the farthest from any precedent left on record by the Apostles of our Lord and Saviour, and the most ruinous to the visible profession of Christianity.

Several supporters of this new plan have already appeared, and I know not how many are now preparing to espouse their cause. I lament that a practice so opposite to that of the first churches seems to make rapid progress, not only among those immediately connected with the teachers who have introduced or revived it, but among other classes who have had longer experience in the Christian profession, and who might have been expected to be less fond of novelties. Even Baptists, who appeal to apostolic example with more consistency than other Christians, because the latter sprinkle infants without example other than that which they conceive to be implied in the baptism of households; even Baptists, I say, who justly plead the necessity of precept or example for every Divine ordinance, think themselves warranted in this instance to decide by a sort of reasoning, as fallacious and inconclusive as that by which others have attempted to support infant baptism. And, as if it had been intended to show the farthest extent of human

inconsistency, the pastoral work and office are treated with disrespect.

The particulars which I mean to state, in opposition to these sentiments, are the following:—

First, Two or three persons cannot be a church of Christ.

Second, What a church really is, particularly in relation to the gifts and offices which belong to it.

Third, The Lord's Supper is an ordinance peculiar to a Christian church.

Fourth, All the examples of keeping this ordinance recorded in the New Testament, took place in organized churches.

Fifth, Dispensing the ordinance of the Supper, or presiding on that occasion, is a part of the work of pastors, and belongs to them exclusively.

Sixth, The opposite plan has a tendency to scatter the sheep of Christ.

First, With respect to that sort of association which constitutes a church of Christ, all Congregational churches are agreed that it cannot be a whole nation, nor a combination of societies within a smaller district, nor any assembly in which the people of God are visibly confounded with the world, nor the rulers or representatives of one or more churches. But some of them run so far to the opposite extreme, as to affirm that two or three believers, when more cannot be had, ought to be considered as a church, and to partake of all its ordinances. And so intoxicated are they with this idea of a church, that it may be doubtful whether any thing will convince them of their error, till some of their brethren shall go a step farther, and seriously maintain that one person constitutes a church when there is not another disciple of Christ in his neighbourhood! And then the only remaining ground of dispute among that class will be, whether one female Christian may not have the same privilege, if indeed a privilege we ought to call it.

This suggests a difficulty which has not yet been solved. If two or three believers constitute a church, and they happen to be all females, what shall be done? for women are not permitted to speak in the church. When such a company therefore meets, of necessity we must say, either that it is not a church, or that all its members must be silent. If any should argue that a woman, speaking where no men are present, does not act opposite to the modesty of her own sex, I could say nothing against this. She may pray, and read the Scriptures, and exhort. But still the difficulty remains, is she warranted to do

all this in the church? And is it possible to give a satisfactory reason why a woman should administer the Lord's Supper?

It seems to be supposed, that because two persons can exercise private discipline, therefore they are the Lord's body, and may partake of the ordinance of the Supper, and some avow this sentiment in the plainest terms. Does not our blessed Saviour, say they, make the supposition that two or three may compose a church? Matt. xviii. Are not these supposed capable of attending to discipline, and all the ordinances of a church? And are they not, in the observance of Christ's ordinances, given to expect his presence and blessing, as well as the most numerous assembly?

As it cannot be argued that there is an example in the New Testament of a church consisting of so small a number, this sentiment must arise solely from mistaking the sense of Matt. xviii. 19, 20. Let us endeavour, therefore, to ascertain the precise meaning of what is there spoken.

That the two or three who have the promise of Christ's presence in the midst of them, cannot be a church, is perfectly clear from the preceding rule of discipline, which supposes an offender, a person offended, and one or two more. If we apply the rule to a complete church like that at Philippi, having bishops and deacons, the number will be doubled, and the offended brother, with one or two other witnesses, must tell the matter of offence to the church or congregation, which at all rates is supposed to exist, whether they have office-bearers or not.

Two persons not in communion with any church may and ought to exercise private discipline, as has been justly remarked. And the nature of the case requires, that if the one turn out to be an impenitent sinner, the other ought to have no fellowship with him. Nothing can be more certain, however, than that he acts merely from his own judgment, and that he has not the sanction of a church of Christ. The very statement of the case proceeds upon the ground that there is no church to which the trespass can be told.

The encouragement given to the church to act faithfully in matters of discipline, is stated in verse 18; and then in verses 19, 20, our Lord reverts to the two steps of private discipline which he had instituted, introducing himself thus, "Again, I say unto you," which marks the transition to another subject, —"If two of you shall agree on earth, as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father who is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." The two persons to whom this promise is made, are not the church;

for they are "two of you," or two members of the church. And the supposition that they are elders or pastors must be equally unfounded; for that would imply that they are two of a greater number, and that if two of them agree, there is no occasion for the concurrence of their fellow-elders and of the whole church. "Two of you," therefore, are the offended brother, and he who hath trespassed against him. They are here directed to pray, and assured of a gracious answer. The promise is likewise extended to those engaged in the second step of the discipline, the number of whom cannot be less than three. In both cases our Lord speaks of them as gathered together in his name, and promises to be in the midst of them.

When a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ goes to tell a brother his fault, and when he takes with him one or two more, they are gathered together in the name of the Lord Jesus. This may well solemnize their minds, and show them the necessity of prayer. In the very first instance, although a difference subsists between them, they may agree in asking light and direction, and that the one may speak, and the other hear, as persons animated by the principles of the Gospel, and under a sense of the authority of their common Lord. From want of this, I doubt not, it has frequently happened that matters of private discipline, which ought always to be conducted in the spirit of love and meekness, and recollecting the presence of Christ, have been made the foundation of quarrels and endless jarring among professing Christians. When the appointed means are blessed, so as to bring the offending brother to repentance, "two of them will agree on earth" to ask Divine forgiveness for the trespass that has been committed, and is now confessed, as well as to implore a disposition in the offended brother to forgive, and a complete restoration of mutual love and confidence.

In like manner, when three are gathered together in the name of Jesus, in order to use farther means for the conviction of the offender, they ought to begin and conclude with prayer. The promise to them is, "Where *three* are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them;" and they have reason to expect, that he who uttered these words will give success to their endeavours for bringing the offender to repentance, or make him fully manifest as a rotten branch in the vine, which requires to be lopped off.

How much is it to be regretted, that instead of taking the proffered assistance of Him who sits upon the throne of David, to order and to establish his kingdom with judgment and with justice for ever, according to the plain meaning of this passage, when Divine aid is so much wanted, the words of this glorious

King should be tortured, and another sense put upon them, completely subversive of the whole doctrine of the New Testament in relation to churches!

That the spirit of the passage which I have thus attempted to explain, may be applicable to every lawful assembly of Christians, while engaged about the things which concern the kingdom of God, I certainly will not deny. But that it was literally and immediately intended for the direction and encouragement of the Lord's disciples, in those two steps of discipline which ought always to precede our telling any matter of private offence to the church, and that it has no literal or immediate respect to any assembly that can justly be called a church, I affirm with that confidence which one ought always to feel when maintaining the truth of God.

It is not my intention to determine so positively the exact number that may be requisite for constituting a church; nor is it incumbent on me to do so. I may be very certain that two or three cannot be a church, without knowing what is the smallest number of which it may consist. The silence of Scripture on that head, renders it impossible to decide with precision. Only it would seem, so far as we can learn from the sacred history of the primitive churches, that they were numerous bodies. They were generally in populous cities; and when Titus was directed to set in order the things which were wanting, he was to ordain elders in every city. At any rate, none of them amounted to so small a number as that which is now pleaded for. We read, it is true, of the church in the house of such a one. But this must either have been a believing family termed a congregation, not because they were a church of Christ properly so called, but because the head of the family worshipped God with all his house, or because all the believers in the place where he lived assembled in his upper room, many of such being large and spacious. Of this description, I apprehend was the place where the church at Troas met, Acts xx.

Having dwelt so long upon what a church of Christ is not, I must now endeavour to show,

Second, What it is, particularly in relation to the gifts and offices which belong to it. It would be giving an imperfect account of a church of Christ, were nothing more said of it than that it consists of visible believers, united in the bond of Christian love, and regularly assembling for the purpose of Divine worship, though these are its leading and essential qualities, as we clearly perceive from the whole of the New Testament. Considering those for whom I write, it is unnecessary to enlarge on the particulars which have just been mentioned.

But is a Christian assembly to have no order, and no leaders either in worship or in discipline? Are there none to whom the oversight of the flock is committed, who feed the church of God, and who watch for their souls, as they who must give an account? Nor any persons whom the church is called to obey, to honour, to esteem very highly in love for their work's sake, as labouring among them, being over them in the Lord, and admonishing them? This undoubtedly must be taken into the account, when we form our ideas of a church of Christ. It is "a congregation of saints in Christ Jesus, with the bishops (overseers) and deacons," Phil. i. 1,—a society in which, though its constitution is extremely simple, yet every provision is made for the most complete decency and order. "God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints."

One leading branch of the order of churches, is the appointment of office-bearers for the management of their spiritual and of their temporal concerns. "The things which Evangelists heard among many witnesses, they were charged to commit to faithful men, who should be able to teach others also," that the great things which God hath done for us, might be transmitted from age to age, and officially taught in all the churches to the end of time. And the characters of those elders or overseers, who were to be chosen by the churches, and ordained or set apart by other teachers, are specified with much precision in the directions given to Timothy and Titus; as are also the characters of the deacons, whose office it was to supply the wants of the poor, and in other respects to be engaged in the honourable work of serving the churches.

This part of the order of the house of God is not absolutely denied; but it is treated lightly, and in certain cases which must often occur, it is entirely set aside by those who labour to convince us that every thing which can be done in a church having office-bearers, may be done without them. They affirm that a few disciples, nay the very smallest number that can meet together, are a church of Christ, and the body of Christ, not with a view to show that the power of choosing office-bearers, and of receiving and excluding members, belongs to the whole church, and that they are God's heritage, over which elders must not exercise a lordly dominion—claims which formerly satisfied every judicious and sober Congregationalist; but with the declared purpose of frequently dispensing with pastors and teachers altogether. For these are to have no place in the body, whenever two or three, or any greater number of disciples, shall think it expedient to act as a church of Christ

without office-bearers. This seems very like the foot saying to the head or the eye, I have no need of thee; an instance of contempt so very unnatural, and repugnant even to reason, that the Apostle does not mention any thing like it in his description of the body of Christ, 1 Cor. xii.

The qualifications most essential to a church of Christ, are their being "one body, guided and animated by one spirit; their being called in one hope of their calling; and having one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in them all." But the gifts which the Lord ascended up on high to bestow, likewise enter into the description of the body of Christ, and are necessary, not in point of form only, but "for the perfecting of the saints for the work of the ministry, and for the edifying of the body of Christ." The disciples, thus privileged, and "speaking the truth in love, grow up into him in all things who is the head, even Christ; from whom the whole body, fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love," Eph. iv. 4—17. No unprejudiced person, who knows the truth, can read the whole of this passage, without perceiving that the body of Christ, like the natural body to which it is compared, consists of many members, and is organized, and visibly appears to be one body, not when the members are in a disjointed state, but when each is fitted into its own proper place, and so contributes to the good of the whole. See also Col. ii. 19, compared with Eph. iv. 16.

In this organization, so necessary to the compacting and to the edification of the body, shall pastors and teachers have no place, although given by the great Head of the church for those very purposes? The various offices, and the Lord's intention in bestowing them, are thus described, "And he gave some apostles; and some prophets; and some evangelists; and some *pastors and teachers;* for the perfecting of the saints," &c. Shall we then affirm, that the whole work of fitting and bringing into joint, and building up the body of Christ, may be performed without pastors and teachers? This indeed has been affirmed, and is a leading part of the doctrine which I now oppose. But where shall we find any authority for it in the Word of God?

Far be it from me, however, to say that the gifts necessary for the edification of a church are exclusively possessed by elders. Every one has it in his power to contribute in some way to the good of the body, 1 Cor. xii. 21—27; and if in this respect he be altogether useless, he is not a living member

of the body. Some have gifts qualifying them for public usefulness as preachers of the Gospel, to whom every encouragement ought to be given. Others, not surely excluding those who preach, are able in various degrees to edify the church, by exhorting them when they are met together. In short, all the talents which God hath given are included here. But the present subject leads me to treat only of the gifts of those who bear office in the churches, which indeed are principally intended by the Apostle in the passages now quoted.

There is another description of the body of Christ in 1 Cor. xii., already hinted at, so apt, and striking, and beautiful, that every part of it bears marks of Divine inspiration. And in it a particular reference is made to the church of God at Corinth, by which it appears that the Apostle had in view, not only the whole of Christ's mystical body, but also congregations of saints, which are visible representations on earth of the general assembly and church of the first-born enrolled in heaven. He states, as in Eph. iv., the various gifts bestowed by our exalted Lord, and then represents believers as one body, dwelling upon this figure, and fully explaining it. And he affirms, that "God hath set the members every one of them in the body (*i. e.* the natural body,) as it hath pleased him;" showing the complete harmony of the whole structure, the necessity of each member in its due place, even the more feeble and the more uncomely, and how they all co-operate with unity of design, for the good of the whole body.

In close connexion with his description of the human body, by which he figuratively describes the body of Christ, he adds, "Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular;" intimating that this very church of God at Corinth was such a body, possessed of all its functions, capable of acting as such, and rendering the body of Christ visible to those around them. Did he affirm this without respect to gifts and offices in the church of Christ? By no means; for he immediately proceeds thus, "And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondly prophets, thirdly *teachers*," and so forth; using the same expression as that which he had used in relation to the natural body—"God hath set the members in the body;" and so here again, "God hath set some in the church," thus organizing a Christian assembly, and fitting them to appear and act as the body of Christ. On the contrary, when there is a want of the principal and governing members, and when the rest are consequently out of their place, may we not ask, as the Apostle does on the supposition of there being but one member, "Where is the body?"

The members particularly specified by the Apostle, are more numerous than those which some persons now take it upon them to say may constitute a church. He affirms in general that, "As the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body being many, are one body, so also is Christ." And then he mentions the foot, the hand, the organ of smelling, and that of hearing, the eye, the head, and also those members which are more feeble, and the less honourable members, which he likewise terms our uncomely parts. It is remarkable that the most honourable and useful members are declared, by the new plan of forming churches, to be sometimes unnecessary, while the Lord himself teacheth us that those members which seem to be more feeble are necessary. Such is the contrast between his judgment and that of his misguided servants!

In any other case one would be apt to say, If the more feeble, and less honourable, and even the uncomely members of a body, are necessary, much more are the strong, the honourable, and the seemly: and this reasoning would be held conclusive. No person who thinks justly would venture to affirm the opposite, nor indeed any one who thinks at all. But it frequently happens, that even sensible people, when they err in matters of religion, get into a state of mind which baffles all argument. Yet there is nothing so rational as the religion of Jesus Christ. We have been called on to say, whether two or three professing disciples are not the body of Christ. If they are real believers, they are undoubtedly members of Christ's mystical body. But I do not scruple to affirm that they are not the body of Christ in any sense explained in the New Testament, to which alone reference must be had for deciding this question. Surely two or three are not the whole church of the redeemed; neither are they a visible representation of the body of Christ in this world, which is always described in the Word of God, when any particular account is given of it, not merely as a company of believers, but as a compacted and organized body. And these two are the only descriptions of the body of Christ which are to be found in the Scriptures.

Again it is argued, that "societies composed of a few believers at Antioch, Lystra, &c., are expressly denominated churches before elders were ordained among them." That in each of those places there was a congregation, the materials of which God's building was formed, and members of Christ, which he fashioned into a regular and organized body, I fully admit. But there is surely a difference between loose stones, however finely polished, and a building complete in all its parts;

and between separate members of a body, and the same members fitted to each other, and so reared as to constitute one body.

To affirm that two or three persons are a church of Christ, is to throw down the whole doctrine of the New Testament, relating to that subject, at one stroke. It is going far beyond the precedents upon which this presumptuous opinion is founded, had it even been plainly declared that the disciples at Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, observed the ordinance of the Lord's Supper before they were set in order. For in each of those places there were among themselves the whole of the materials requisite for constituting organized churches—a sufficient number of male persons out of whom to choose office-bearers, and more than one qualified to feed the church of God which he hath purchased with his own blood; evidently implying that there was also a church capable of being fed. Such a deficiency in point of number, or of gifts, as renders every thing of this sort impossible, must totally set aside the claim of any society of Christians to be accounted a church of Christ, properly so called.

It is but a flimsy excuse to say, that the Lord will add to their numbers. He may, or he may not. Meanwhile, it is their duty to wait his time, and to pray to the Lord of the harvest, both for converts and for labourers. It may likewise be remarked, that in many places where there are only two or three believers, there is no probability, humanly speaking, that during a whole lifetime a sufficient number will be gathered to constitute a church. The disorderly plan, therefore, which I feel it my duty to oppose, has not, in most cases, even the merit of being a temporary one. And I shall afterwards show that it threatens, not only to prevent the gathering of new churches, but to effect the dissolution of those already formed: and consequently that, however much the favourers of the plan in question may think themselves disposed to respect the elder's office, if persons duly qualified could be obtained, their manner of proceeding is in fact subversive of that Divine institution.

Edinburgh, November 21, 1807.

VI.—ON EATING THE LORD'S SUPPER WITHOUT ELDERS.

In my last letter I endeavoured to show, First, That two or three persons cannot be a church of Christ.

Second, That a church, strictly and properly speaking, is an organized body of disciples.

The next thing that I proposed to offer to the consideration of enquirers, was,

Third, That the Lord's Supper is an ordinance peculiar to a Christian church.

So clearly does this appear from every thing in the New Testament which relates to "the breaking of bread," that, in the judgment of not a few simple Christians, who in general are best qualified to judge, I am persuaded that an attempt to establish it, will appear, if not trifling, at least altogether superfluous. I am not however fully convinced that my opponents admit the assertion, nor indeed that they have considered this part of the subject with the attention which it deserves.

My opponents have said that they will not admit that the Lord's Supper may be observed independently of the order and presence of a church. But what is the order and presence of a church? Two or three may compose a church. Now, I cannot perceive much difference between saying that the Lord's Supper belongs to disciples individually considered, and affirming that two or three may partake of it. Perhaps none who maintain these sentiments would hesitate to own that the Lord's Supper is a church ordinance, were they fully convinced in their own minds that a church may consist of so small a number.

One of the arguments of those who plead for eating the Lord's Supper without elders, is its being the principal thing in view when Christians assemble on the first day of the week; its peculiar importance, the high degree of edification and comfort which we may expect in attending to it every Lord's day; its tendency to strengthen our faith, to enliven our hope, and to confirm, as well as to show forth, our union as the body of Christ. And they might have added, that it was instituted on "the night in which Jesus was betrayed," and that it is "THE FEAST which we must keep with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." That there is something peculiar in this ordinance, likewise appears from its sanction, "Whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily,

shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord," 1 Cor. xi. 27. When they press the observance of the Lord's Supper from the consideration of its great importance, they say much in praise of this ordinance, and represent the keeping of it as the indispensable duty of Christians, wherever two of them can assemble. How much soever a few disciples may be engaged in prayer, praise, reading the Scriptures, and mutual exhortation, they seem to consider these as nothing, if the Lord's Supper be not dispensed.

Again, when they attempt to show the lawfulness of two or three persons, or any greater number, partaking of the Lord's Supper without elders, they reduce it to the level of other ordinances, and endeavour to prove that we ought to view it in the same light with prayer or praise; and that, if two or three disciples attend to all other ordinances, they cannot with any consistency scruple to break bread. The opposite practice is stigmatized as arising from superstitious veneration for this ordinance, and something nearly akin to the idolatrous regard which has been paid to Romish priests. Here I cannot help remarking, that they might have treated with more tenderness a scruple of conscience which so extensively prevails, had they even seen nothing more than a very slight ground for it in the Word of God. But to return to the subject in hand. Blessing the bread and wine, or giving thanks for these, is declared to be "competent to every brother."

One of the reasons for "the propriety of believers who associate together for observing the other ordinances of the Lord, as a church, observing also the Lord's Supper," is the impropriety of exalting any one ordinance of the Lord Jesus Christ's appointment over another.

Were it not that the drift of all their arguments, tending to increase or to diminish our just veneration for this Divine ordinance, is perfectly clear, and fairly avowed, one would be at a loss to determine whether upon the whole they mean to exalt or to depreciate it. Be it observed, however, that many of them, I am confident, would not for the whole world utter one syllable derogatory to the Lord's Supper, were they not hurried on by a strong desire to put it within the reach of all the disciples of Jesus, in whatever circumstances they may be placed, and without duly considering whether this be done by lawful means. This concession I make with the utmost cheerfulness, and with all sincerity.

I request the attention of all such persons to a few remarks, designed to show that they are greatly mistaken who suppose that there is nothing peculiar in this ordinance, and that it may

be observed wherever two or three meet together for social worship.

They need not however be afraid that I shall favour a superstitious regard to any ordinance; nor have they the smallest occasion to deprecate the revival of that principle in the present age, especially among those who may be expected to pay attention to this controversy. Many of them have gone to an opposite extreme; and among the whole of them it would perhaps be difficult to produce one instance of a truly superstitious mind.

(1.) Baptism and the Lord's Supper are both symbolical ordinances, representing by outward signs the foundation of our hope towards God, and the spiritual benefits which all believers obtain through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. There is a remarkable distinction between them and other Divine institutions, none of which except these two having any thing figurative in them. The typical dispensation has been abolished, and good things to come are not now, in any one instance, represented by types and shadows, unless the figure of a resurrection in baptism may be considered in that light. But the things which are set forth in baptism are the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and his blood which cleanseth from all sin; and if believers who are immersed in water have an emblem of their own resurrection when they are raised up out of the water, it is because they have fellowship with Christ in his death and resurrection, which is likewise signified in this ordinance.

Notwithstanding the substance prefigured by the former shadows being come, and the worship of New Testament churches being pure, simple, and spiritual, such is our weakness, and our need of being instructed and edified by sensible representations, that the Lord hath condescended to give us two ordinances of that nature, to call to our remembrance in the most striking manner the glorious foundation of all our hope, to preach to us figuratively all that is doctrinally held forth in the Gospel, and to make our very senses the means or instruments by which spiritual blessings and consolations are imparted. There are instituted elements and forms, each of them full of meaning, and all intended to produce in the minds of believers a deep consideration, and a comfortable enjoyment of the love of Christ, "who bare their sins in his own body on the tree."

To the Lord's Supper chiefly, the Apostle seems to refer when he says, concerning the Galatians, "Before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among

you," chap. iii. 1. The words spoken by our Lord at the institution of this ordinance, hitherto thought necessary to be repeated wherever it has been observed, are of similar import, "This is my body which is broken for you—this cup is the New Testament in my blood, which is shed for you." And the Apostle adds, "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come."

I have no occasion to explain more minutely the nature of either of those ordinances, intending at present only to remark that they are symbolical, and in this respect similar to each other, but eminently distinguished from all the rest of the Christian institutions.

(2.) Baptism is distinguished, not only from prayer, praise, &c., but also from the Lord's Supper, by its never being repeated, and by its application, in all cases, to individual persons. In its own nature it has nothing to do with church communion any farther than that those who are added to a church ought first to be baptised, Acts ii. 41. Churches of Christ have always fellowship in that which is signified by baptism; but in the outward administration and participation of the ordinance, they can have no communion as churches, without acting in direct opposition to every precept and every example in the New Testament, relating to that subject.

(3.) With respect to the last-mentioned particulars, the Lord's Supper is precisely the reverse of baptism. The commandment of its Divine institutor is, "Do this in remembrance of me;" and his death must be shown forth in the churches, "as often as they eat this bread, and drink this cup, until he come again." The breaking of bread is likewise an ordinance which cannot be dispensed to an individual believer. The three thousand converted on the day of Pentecost, added to the former hundred and twenty, "continued steadfastly in the breaking of bread," Acts ii. 42; and every other example accords with this, in the nature, though not in the number of the assembly. In a church of the saints only, whatever society we conceive to be meant by that appellation, we must do this in remembrance of our crucified Lord. Ought we not then to startle at the idea of one person giving the symbols of Christ's body and blood to another individual, in the same manner as he might, if duly called to it, administer the ordinance of baptism? They who follow this practice must either believe that the Lord's Supper is not the exclusive privilege of a church, or that a church is any thing which they choose to call by that name, how far soever it may come short of the acknowledged description of the apostolic churches.

(4.) Reading the Scriptures, exhortation, prayer, and praise,

are not merely church ordinances. They are such when observed by churches. But when a believer prays in his family, or in his closet, there is no church communion there. All those duties may be performed in a great variety of situations, and in this respect they are not positive institutions, but moral duties, daily incumbent upon those who live by the faith of Christ. My opponents will not affirm that Christians ought to be engaged in the duties which have been mentioned only in their church assemblies. And they will admit that it is equally lawful for a few Christians to meet on the Lord's day for the worship of God, as it is to be engaged in the same exercises at other times; nay, that it is their bounden duty to be thus employed when it is in their power. The ordinance of discipline is no exception here. Even where there is an organized body of disciples, or a New Testament church, discipline is not confined to their public assemblies. On the contrary, the most essential parts of it, as has been stated in Letter V., are expressly commanded to be attended to in private; and I have shown, that discipline may be exercised where there is no church.

What then becomes of the argument founded on the inconsistency of a few brethren doing every thing which can be done by an organized body, except eating the Lord's Supper? Why should we not make an exception of that which God hath not included among the privileges of individual Christians? The truth is, that the Lord's Supper is the only ordinance which belongs exclusively to a church of Christ as such, or a society which can justly be denominated "the house of God, the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth." This is the sense in which the Lord's Supper is to be accounted a church ordinance; not merely because it is observed in a church, for so are prayer and praise, but because there alone it can lawfully be observed.

A few disciples meeting together, not having the order of a New Testament church, are in the same situation with respect to the Lord's Supper, as they would be if each of them were confined at home by sickness. And if the commandment, "Do this in remembrance of me," obliges them to proceed in the one case, it must be equally binding in the other. Upon this I shall only remark, that it would be well if all the disciples of Jesus were equally solicitous to do his will in those numberless instances which every day are within their reach. If such were the uniform state of their minds, they would never be disapproved for neglecting that which they could not do according to the will of God, although in other circumstances it would have been their indispensable duty. There may be ground of

conviction here; for we seldom show excessive zeal in favour of one thing, without overlooking, or not paying due respect to many other things.

There is an indecency, to say no worse of it, in attempting to bring down the importance and solemnity of the ordinance of the Supper. We are too apt to undervalue other ordinances, and to be greatly deficient in that solemn and reverential state of mind which becomes us in every approach to the living God. But it is impossible that we can too highly venerate that ordinance, which represents by outward signs the body and blood of the Lord, and which is delivered to the churches with sanctions awful beyond expression. They who rush forward to it in a careless and irreverent manner, and in many cases taking it upon them to supersede the order of the house of God, know not what they do.

Fourth, All the examples of keeping this ordinance recorded in the New Testament, took place in organized churches.

There are three instances of the primitive Christians remembering the Lord's death in the ordinance of the Supper after his resurrection; which, together with the original institution of it by the Lord himself, are all the express authorities in the form of example upon which we can proceed. Every thing else is mere conjecture. These examples are,

(1.) The first and the most eminent is that of THE GREAT LAWGIVER OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH AND HIS ELEVEN APOSTLES; which, while we cannot think of it but with the deepest reverence, presents to our view the most perfect church that ever was assembled in this sinful world, and the GLORIOUS HEAD OF THE CHURCH presiding among them.

(2.) The next is that of the church of God at Jerusalem, the first that was congregated after the resurrection of Jesus, and the pattern set for the imitation of all succeeding churches, 1 Thess. ii. 14. Here there were for some time no elders, properly so called. How long we know not, nor is it material that we should know. They had elders about ten years after the day of Pentecost, Acts xi. 30, mentioned also chap. xv. 4, 6, &c., and chap. xxi. 18. But the Apostles themselves were the rulers of that church, Heb. xiii. 7; and possessing, as they did, the highest office in the church, every inferior office was included therein. Thus they frequently denominate themselves elders, 1 Pet. v. 1. 2 John, ver. 1. 3 John, ver. 1; and at the first, they likewise, during a short period, acted as deacons, Acts, vi. 2. It is undeniable therefore that the twelve Apostles were the elders of the church at Jerusalem; and there were many other gifts and office-bearers among them, so that

in relation to order, as well as every thing else, there could be no deficiency.

(3.) Another instance is the church of God at Corinth, "who abounded in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and came behind in no gift," who had many prophets among them, the office next in order to that of Apostles, and who are described as a completely organized body, having teachers, 1 Cor. xii. Here I beg leave to refer the reader to Letter V., and shall only further remark, in relation to this church, that the Apostle represents them as one body with reference to the Lord's Supper, 1 Cor. x. 16, 17. "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread, and one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread." One loaf of bread, consisting of many particles, is here made a figure of one body, who are many and yet one, partaking of the ordinance of the supper. They were one as being all united to Christ, and enjoying the blessings of redemption through him. And they were visibly one by their profession of faith in Christ, and their assembling in the order which he hath appointed to observe his ordinances, and particularly the ordinance of the Lord's Supper; thus giving a just representation of what the body of Christ really is, which they could not have done as separate and disjointed members. Was it not this also that led the Apostle to say to the Colossians, "Though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ?"

(4.) The only remaining instance is that of the church at Troas, Acts xx., about which many doubts have been started, such as, "Were they a church? for they are only called disciples;" though they who ask this question do not always scruple to admit that disciples are a church.—"Had they any pastors and teachers?—Who administered the Lord's Supper on the occasion referred to, for it is not said that this service was performed by Paul?" Therefore I suppose it is thought most probable that some private brother was employed, while not only ordinary teachers, but an Apostle and an Evangelist were there! Paul, however, seems to have had the lead in that assembly, for he is the only preacher who is named; "he continued his speech until midnight," and after performing a miracle, "he talked a long while, even till break of day."

Without attempting to answer every question, I shall state what convinces my own mind that the disciples at Troas had been set in order as a church, before they received this visit from Paul and his seven companions, mentioned ver. 4.

There is some reason to conclude that the Gospel was preached by Paul at Troas, when he went first there with Silas and Timotheus, Acts xvi. 8. This took place about seven years before the visit which I am now considering, and may be that which is noticed by him, 2 Cor. ii. 12, where he says, "When I came to Troas to preach Christ's Gospel, and a door was opened to me of the Lord," &c. That he refers to the same period, is probable from what he adds, ver. 13, "But taking my leave of them, I went into Macedonia," which agrees with Acts xvi. 9, 10, 12. It would seem therefore that Paul at that time preached Christ's Gospel at Troas, though this is omitted in Luke's narrative; and that he had considerable success there, for "a door was opened to him of the Lord." And is it to be supposed that the disciples at Troas would remain seven years without being set in order, when we know that elders were ordained in other churches within about one year after the Gospel had been first preached to them? Acts xiv. 23. At any rate Paul's preaching at Troas, which he mentions to the Corinthians, must have been at a period prior to his visit narrated in Acts xx.; for that visit took place several years after his second epistle to the Corinthians was witten, and he was not now going into Macedonia, but had just come out of it, Acts xx. 6.

I shall only add that, although less evidence could have been produced that there was a regular church at Troas when the disciples came together to break bread, we ought to explain a brief and imperfect account of the manner of observing the Lord's Supper by those which are more full and particular. Had not Paul mentioned his preaching at Troas and the effects of it, we should have had no direct evidence of the fact in Luke's narration. But is it likely that, without having any end to serve by it, we would have said that he did not preach there, while we know that in general, wherever he was, he preached the Gospel? And were I next to affirm that the glad tidings of salvation were preached at Melita, would the silence of Luke be held decisive against me?

These are all the examples which I can find in the New Testament. But they who wish to prove the lawfulness of a few disciples eating the Lord's Supper without elders, have recourse, in a sort of conjectural way, to those churches in which Paul and Barnabas ordained elders, Acts xiv. 23. And I am seriously convinced that, instead of proving their point, they take some of the following things for granted:—1st, That one of those churches at least, consisted of no more than two or three members.—2d, That there were no extraordinary teachers, as prophets or evangelists, raised up in any of those churches.

—3d, That they actually did eat the Lord's Supper before they had elders, and in the absence of Paul, Barnabas, and other extraordinary teachers.—4th, That when Paul and Barnabas were present, this ordinance was administered by a private brother. I am sure that, in order to establish their doctrine in its full extent, it is incumbent on them to give satisfactory evidence of the truth of these four assertions, unless they can show that the Lord's Supper belongs to individual Christians, and is not the peculiar privilege of the churches of Christ. As they have not done either, nor attempted to do it, their reasonings are completely answered by a mere affirmation that they have no such evidence to produce.

For my own part I will not affirm that societies of Christians, before they obtained elders, did not eat the Lord's Supper, when Apostles and other extraordinary teachers, who had the care of all the churches, were present with them. But they could not be said to want elders when those presiding among them were superior to ordinary pastors, and having a general charge, "Feed my lambs, feed my sheep," had power to teach authoritatively, and to preside and rule wherever they went. This, therefore, although it had been expressly declared in the Word of God, would have been the farthest thing imaginable from sanctioning the practice of eating the Lord's Supper without elders. No person, I should think, will attempt to justify it on this ground. Nor am I persuaded that ordinary pastors and teachers are warranted to dispense the Lord's Supper in congregations which have no elders of their own. Apostles and Evangelists might supply this deficiency; but, so far as I am able to perceive, it cannot be supplied by office-bearers who have no general superintendence of the churches.

Two particulars on this subject remain to be discussed in my next letter.

EDINBURGH, NOVEMBER 28, 1807.

VII.—ON EATING THE LORD'S SUPPER WITHOUT ELDERS.

REFERRING to the arguments adduced in my 5th and 6th Letters, tending to prove that the Lord's Supper cannot lawfully be observed without elders, I now remark,

Fifth, That dispensing the ordinance of the Supper, or presiding on that occasion, is a part of the pastor's work, and belongs to him exclusively.

Here, again, my opponents argue so loosely, that they seem as if they were pleased with turning things upside down. They say that it will be difficult, if not impossible, to prove that ever an apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor, or teacher, presided at the ordinance of the Lord's Supper. If by this only is meant, that the fact is not expressly declared in the Scriptures, it will neither be difficult nor impossible to prove that assertion, although it be a negative, unless we should consider the Lord himself as sustaining all those characters in the highest perfection, and produce the most complete evidence that he once presided at this ordinance. What may be the precise ground of this uncertainty, it seems not very easy to determine; for it would be just as reasonable to doubt whether any of those teachers ever had communion with the churches in the ordinance of the Lord's Supper. No just argument can require the support of conjectures so wild and extravagant.

It might have been enough surely to have given a private brother authority to preside at this ordinance when no elders are present. But to give him the precedency of pastors, teachers, evangelists, prophets, and apostles, is extraordinary indeed! Were this the case, they could not be elders, overseers, shepherds, or presidents.

Every thing that we find in the Scriptures relating to the character, office, and work of Christian teachers, seems to imply that they are to feed the church of God, and to act as leaders and presidents both in worship and in discipline. But this subject is to be separately considered. And with respect to a private brother officiating at the Lord's Supper where no elders are present, I have said enough to condemn that practice, in describing the order of a New Testament church. Even those indeed who wish to establish it, have made a concession which ought to convince them of their error. It is very candidly acknowledged that "we cannot prove that in any one recorded instance of the Lord's Supper, elders were not present;" "That we have no express precept or example in Scripture on the subject of churches observing the Lord's Supper without elders, is indisputable;" I therefore think it is equally indisputable that we should "have no such custom, neither the churches of God."

On the other hand, I freely admit that we cannot have a particular precept or an example for every privilege and for every duty. But we ought to be extremely cautious of going beyond these in relation to ordinances which have nothing moral in their own nature, and depend solely and exclusively on the will of the institutor. Some tell us that we have no example for women eating the Lord's Supper; and a reverend

and learned gentleman once affirmed, when reasoning with me in support of *tradition*, that on my principle, which was that of taking no human tradition as a rule of faith or practice, women could not be baptised. I replied, that "believers were baptised at Samaria, both men and women." He forgot himself so far, in the heat of argument, as to insist that there was no such text in all the Bible, though I repeated it verbatim. This fact, however, was soon decided by a mutual reference to the Scriptures.

There would be no greater absurdity in an attempt to exclude females from the Lord's Supper for want of an example as express as that which relates to baptism, than there is, in attempting to deprive pastors of the exclusive right of administering the ordinance of the Supper, because it is not expressly stated in the New Testament that this service was always performed by ordinary or extraordinary teachers. Such authority was not needful in either case. Discipleship ascertains the privilege of females; and the trust reposed in elders by the great Head of the church, as well as the nature of the ordinance itself, equally proves that they only are warranted to preside at the Lord's Supper.

Not only the nations called Christian, but many of the Lord's disciples have supposed, that although believing men and women, and they alone, are said to have been baptised by the Apostles, yet they may innocently include children. And they maintain, some of them at least, the lawfulness of baptising infants, as confidently as if the sacred historian had said they were baptised, men, women, and children. Nay, if the Lord had commanded children only to be baptised, men and women could scarcely have been more effectually debarred from that ordinance than they are by the practice of Pædobaptists; so true is it that "the commandments of God are made void by the traditions of men." But it is not more unwarrantable to plead the silence of Scripture for infant baptism, than for the Lord's Supper being administered by any brother. The dispute in each of these cases is incontrovertibly decided by the nature of the ordinance, and also by the practice contended for, being opposite to all the examples which God in his infinite wisdom hath seen meet to record for our imitation.

Many of those who practise the baptism of infants, fairly acknowledge that in this particular they go beyond Scripture example, and this is admitted by all who plead for eating the Lord's Supper without elders. But in each of these cases they say, "It is not forbidden." And I ask, if we suppose ourselves at liberty to do all that is not expressly forbidden in the Word of God, to what degree of superstition and will-worship

may we not be led? And are there not also moral evils which upon the same principle might be practised without remorse?

At a time when Christians are so much stunned and perplexed with new modes of conducting Divine worship, I may be permitted humbly and affectionately to recommend to them a good old rule, which is perfectly safe, and will never have a tendency to wound their consciences. It is this, "If there be any circumstances relating to Divine ordinances not expressly commanded or exemplified in the Word of God, conduct these matters agreeably to the spirit of the Gospel, the nature of the institutions, concerning which every iota is not specified, and the general rules of decency and order. But if there be a precept or an example, follow it implicitly, not daring to stop short of it from motives of prudence, nor to go beyond it from motives of apparent zeal. If there be more examples than one, explain those which are narrated in a summary way, by those which are more full, circumstantial, and explicit. And beware of acting upon a mere supposition of any thing which God hath not revealed, especially in those cases wherein he hath given a direct and positive rule of duty; lest he give you up 'to walk in the light of your own fire, and in the sparks which ye have kindled.'"

Sixth, The practice which I have been censuring has a tendency to scatter the sheep of Christ. To this remark I earnestly request the attention of all my Christian brethren, who at present see it their duty to attend to the Lord's Supper without elders, or are thrown into a confused and doubtful state of mind in relation to that subject.

If there were even a just reason for dubiety with respect to the line of duty in this particular, this affirmation, if it be true, ought to have great influence on the minds of all who wish the prosperity of Zion, to prevent them from adopting new schemes without the most direct and positive authority from the Word of God. They may say, perhaps, that they must act according to their own conviction of duty, without regard to consequences. But if the effects produced be really and necessarily evil, that which produces them cannot be consistent with "the good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God."

(1.) While innumerable divisions have taken place among the followers of Christ through the influence of the Man of Sin, and the corruption of their own hearts, every lover of the truth must know that the doctrine of the Gospel, and all the laws and institutions of Christ, have an invariable tendency to promote among the people of God that unity which was promised in the Scriptures of the Old Testament, for which Jesus

prayed, John xvii., which was beautifully exemplified in the first Christian church, and which is solemnly and most earnestly enjoined on several of the churches by the Apostles of our Lord and Saviour. But the disorderly plan of eating the Lord's Supper without elders, evidently threatens to scatter the flock, to be a new source of division among the disciples of Jesus, and to reduce and separate them into the smallest numbers. If the promoters of this divisive plan do not repent, and endeavour to undeceive those whom they have led astray, not only will it become a ground of dispute and quarrel in organized churches; but many who are now members of such congregations will be led away by it, and instead of "glorifying God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, with one mind and one mouth," as they have hitherto done, they will divide themselves into a variety of small parties, and retire from the public profession of the name of Christ.

Some may live at the distance of five or ten miles, and others perhaps twenty or thirty miles from the church of which they are members. This is a considerable inconvenience, as they cannot regularly attend the church meetings on the Lord's day. Our fathers did not think so much as we do of travelling a dozen or even twenty miles, for the purpose of enjoying public ordinances, as they understood them. In our day half a dozen miles is reckoned by some an intolerable grievance, though there are others who exert themselves to that extent with the utmost cheerfulness. The former begin to think that no advantage which may not be enjoyed at home is to be obtained by going so far to a church; nay, that two or three at their own fireside, have as good a right to be a church, and to possess all its privileges, as the large society of which they have been members. Consequently, they have no longer any desire to enjoy that which till lately has been understood by the term church communion.

Others who have been rendered still more effeminate by living in the nearer neighbourhood of great cities, may complain as much of walking two or three miles, and some perhaps will not give themselves the trouble to go a single mile, because they have been taught to think lightly of the order of New Testament churches, and to consider the most essential parts of it as superstition and priestcraft. If they all imbibe the same doctrine, none of them will have any strong inducement to maintain their former connexion; they gradually fall off, and the church is dissolved.

(2.) The same ruinous consequences will be produced in another respect; for an insuperable bar is thrown in the way of gathering churches. Suppose to yourself four places at the

distance of one mile from each other, and two or three disciples newly converted residing in each of these, and an organized church at the distance of ten or twelve miles. According to our former ideas, they would have been added to the church, and with it they would have enjoyed all the ordinances, at least occasionally. When that was impossible, they would never have thought of meeting separately without a serious and unavoidable cause. The most convenient situation of the four would have been chosen, as the place of assembling with one accord; and this would have been a comfortable small society, with a probability of increasing in gifts and numbers, and in due time having the things wanting set in order, and elders ordained among them.

But what is likely to happen now? The distant church is out of the question; to it they reckon themselves in no respect amenable. Each of the four subdivisions is taught to consider itself as a church, and to arrogate to its own small company, more than seems the immediate privilege of the whole eight or twelve persons. None of them have any stimulus to induce them to move from their own hearths, unless the fervency of Christian love prevail, and make them desirous of seeing one another. And we all know that love is apt to cool, and that churches would be ill attended if we should never assemble with them except when we are under the impulse of strong and lively affection. Whenever, therefore, there is any deficiency in the exercise of fervent love, without using the proper means to rekindle the flame, and to reanimate the drooping soul, each small division remains at home; a church which might have increased to a multitude, is crushed in the bud; the world have no opportunity of hearing the Word of God; and the profession of the name of Christ in that neighbourhood languishes and expires.

Amidst all this, what becomes of the few who had made the Christian profession? Some of them may hold fast the precious faith of the Gospel, as the Lord's own people do even in mystical Babylon, and may as individuals adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour. But, considered as societies, in all probability they are more employed in settling disputed points of divinity, and in forming schemes for regulating, or rather, I may say, for annihilating churches, than in considering how they may grow in the Divine life and edify one another. Their plan is not less unfriendly to personal religion than it is to the welfare and prosperity of the churches. Fearless reasoning about Divine things may issue in avowed infidelity.

I must not, however, be understood as affirming that in all cases, matters will proceed according to the statement which has been given. Such is the tendency of the new doctrine about churches in its full extent. But the evils to which it

leads cannot be supposed always to abound in the same degree.

(3.) An opportunity is given to discontented persons to strike off in all directions, and to form numberless schismatical parties; and then we shall have churches resembling the army of David when he was in the cave of Adullam. "Every one that was in distress, and every one that was in debt, and every one that was discontented, gathered themselves unto him; and he became a captain over them," 1 Sam. xxii. 1, 2. Nay, even the discipline of the house of God will thus be rendered of no effect, because, whenever any thing occurs to put two or three persons out of humour, and to wound their pride, or when they are justly excommunicated; if they still wish to keep up a profession, they assume the name and character of a church of Christ, assembling together and eating the Lord's Supper, which surely would be nothing less than profaning that Divine ordinance. Still, however, they are kept in countenance by many others, who maintain the same disorderly principle upon which those schismatics proceed; and they feel no want of church communion, nor any thing in their situation that can have a tendency to lead them to repentance for those evils which threw them out of a church.

I know an instance in point. A man and his wife who had been put away from a church of Christ for a train of conduct quite inconsistent with the Christian profession, applied for readmission, and not being able to satisfy the church, were still kept in a state of exclusion. The consequence was, that they observed the Lord's Supper at home, on the ground that they had as good a right to be a church, and to enjoy that ordinance, as was possessed by those who had rejected them. In this case, the two persons did not continue to eat and drink judgment to themselves. They repented of that evil, though still they were not admitted into the church. But many similar cases may occur which will be productive of a long course of iniquity and impiety.

My next remark is not precisely of the same class with those which have preceded it. But you will permit me to add,

(4.) That the new plan of forming churches, and of conducting their worship, mars the solemnity and respectability of Christian assemblies, and is inconsistent with that publicity which ought to characterise their proceedings.

Superstitious solemnity, of which those who agree with me have been, I think, unjustly accused, is nothing but an affectation of that for which I plead. And respectability in a worldly point of view will not be coveted by the true followers of Christ, who know that the offence of the cross shall never cease while

there are men who possess carnal and unrenewed hearts. But they ought neither "to suffer as evil doers," nor to expose themselves to the ridicule of the world by their own folly and absurdity, in any matter, especially when they are engaged in the immediate service of God. How much soever ungodly men may despise the institutions of Christ, these are not in themselves trifling and contemptible; on the contrary, the manifestation of the truth which appears in them is suited to command the respect of thoughtless sinners. Unbelievers who come into our assemblies will not in general "say that we are mad," if nothing really extravagant or foolish appear among us; and if our worship, regulated by the example of the primitive churches, shall be managed with such order and solemnity as shall hold forth to spectators the awful lesson taught us in these words, "God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all who are about him."

But are not onlookers entitled to say that two or three persons, or a greater number of disciples, whose worship is not conducted by an approved teacher, calling themselves a church of Christ, and partaking of the Lord's Supper, are assuming that which does not belong to them? And is it any wonder that not only the persons so employed, but the ordinances of the Lord Jesus Christ, should thus become objects of ridicule and contempt? Our reputation for wisdom in this matter is of little consequence. But when, through our own folly, and our blindly and tenaciously persisting in the misapplication of Scripture texts, we degrade the Christian worship in the eyes of all men; we do an injury to our holy profession, and give occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully.

With respect to the publicity which ought to be given to all the proceedings of churches, so far as the world have any thing to do with these, for certainly they could not be edified by many things which occur in cases of discipline; how shall societies consisting of two or three make any public appearance, or be the means of publishing and perpetuating the Word of God? They shrink into obscure corners, and the far greater number of those small companies will scarcely even be heard of by their nearest neighbours, or have any attention paid to them, except by persons who favour their peculiar sentiments, and who are of that cast of mind which qualifies them for giving to mere supposition the force of direct and positive proof. This does not resemble a candlestick, with its lamp or candle giving light to all around, nor a city set on a hill, which cannot be hid.

When two or three disciples live at a distance from the church of which they are members, and cannot in general assemble with it, this is a case of necessity which admits of no doubt. It

is their duty to worship God in private, or with that degree of publicity which Christian prudence in various cases will dictate, according to the gifts which they possess, and the opportunities which may occur in providence. But they are still members of a church consisting of a larger body; they communicate part of that light which the church is intended to display; they consider the Lord's Supper as the exclusive privilege of the church; and none of them, although their number should increase, become public teachers without the suffrage of their brethren.

Some who disapprove in general of the Lord's Supper being administered to churches having no elders, agitate this question, "May not an organized body of Christians lawfully partake of that ordinance, when their pastor or pastors are occasionally absent, or when they are removed by death?"

In the preceding discussion of the subject, this circumstance is not expressly mentioned; nor will it often occur, when churches who have it in their power to choose two or more elders do not voluntarily decline that privilege. The probability of being reduced to a situation so distressing, in a congregation where there is only one president, is therefore a strong argument for a plurality of elders.

If just views of the nature of churches, and of the ordinance of the Lord's Supper, and of the pastoral office, all conspire to show that presiding at that ordinance is the peculiar work of elders, as I have endeavoured to prove, it follows of course that it cannot, on any occasion, be dispensed by a private brother. The necessity of resorting to such an expedient, in consequence of a pastor being confined by sickness, is not more urgent, although it extends to a greater number of persons, than it would be in the case of a Christian family, prevented by indisposition from assembling with the church, yet able to join in social worship at home; and the Word of God, as we have seen, does not admit the lawfulness of such a company of disciples partaking of the Lord's Supper.

When we are deprived of Divine ordinances by our own negligence, or by false principles, our conduct is sinful; but when this occurs from the hand of God upon us, or upon those whom he hath appointed to feed the flock, we are guiltless in this matter. Will any one affirm that it is our duty to attend public ordinances, when personal affliction obliges us to remain at home, or when we are necessarily living, for a time, in some remote place, where it would be impossible to assemble with a church of Christ? In all such cases, as I have formerly hinted, we are free from the immediate obligation of commemorating the death of Christ in the ordinance of the Supper; but not.

from attending to prayer, praise, reading the Scriptures, and such other religious exercises as we have in our power. And it appears to me that churches are in circumstances precisely similar, when God occasionally deprives them of office-bearers who alone are warranted to preside at the Lord's table, or when death puts an end to all their labours. The reasons why every company of disciples ought to observe other ordinances, and not the breaking of bread, have been already stated.

The practice of employing a private brother to dispense the Lord's Supper, must be in itself either lawful or unlawful. If it be lawful, he ought always to do it where there are no elders; and even in their presence his refraining from it would, in that case, be a matter of expediency or propriety, rather than of necessity or duty, because such employment would be within the sphere which belongs to him. If, on the contrary, it be unlawful in its own nature, it must be such at all times, and in all circumstances.

There is no medium, therefore, between considering the administration of the Lord's Supper as peculiar to the elder's office, and authorizing a private brother to perform that service at any time, with the same freedom as if he were an ordained pastor. We must either go the full length of admitting that believers ought thus to remember the Lord's death before they obtain elders, or deny that they can warrantably, upon any occasion, partake of the Lord's Supper when they have no elder to preside among them. The latter only coincides with the whole doctrine of the New Testament in relation to churches, and with every description of the work assigned to those who are over them in the Lord.

Upon the whole, if the disciples of Christ shall proceed in forming churches agreeably to the model left on record by the inspired Apostles, and decidedly give their voice against the only ordinance peculiar to a church being administered to a body of Christians, large or small, not resembling those churches to which the Lord's Supper was delivered by the Apostles, we may expect that they will be edified, and that the Word of the Lord will have free course and be glorified. But if they shall persist in paying no respect to the order of the house of God, churches will dwindle away to nothing, the public and ostensible profession of the name of Christ will, in a great measure, be extinguished, and perishing sinners will have little opportunity of hearing the Word of life, or of being struck with the grand simplicity of Gospel ordinances, administered according to the will of God, and so admirably calculated to exhibit "the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ," to believers of the truth and to all men.

I still hope that our Almighty Lord, "who holdeth the stars in his right hand, and walketh in the midst of the golden candlesticks," will deliver from so great an evil the churches which he owns as his. But if he shall be pleased, as a punishment for the sins of his people, to permit them to follow out this desolating scheme, "their own wickedness shall correct them, and their backslidings shall reprove them." Meanwhile, those of them who have uniformly adhered to the order of the apostolic churches, will see cause to mourn over the scattered stones of Zion. They will "favour the dust thereof," when nothing but the dust and the ruins thereof shall ascertain the place where Zion stood. They will say, as Israel of old, and with anguish of spirit heightened by the consideration that an enemy hath not done it, but those who profess to be the friends of Jesus, "Thy holy cities are a wilderness, Zion is a wilderness, Jerusalem a desolation. Our holy and our beautiful house, where our fathers praised thee, is burnt up with fire; and all our pleasant things are laid waste."

Who shall then invite "Mount Zion to rejoice; and the daughters of Judah to be glad, because of the Lord's judgments?" Who shall "walk about Zion, and go round about her, and tell the towers thereof, and mark well her bulwarks, and consider her palaces, that they may tell it to the generation following?" And who shall "say of Zion, that this and that man was born in her, and that THE HIGHEST himself shall establish her," when she hath forsaken the way of the Lord her God?

"Thus saith JEHOVAH, Stand ye in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein; and ye shall find rest for your souls," Jer. vi. 16.

EDINBURGH, DECEMBER 5, 1807.

VIII.—ON THE NATURE OF THE ELDER'S OFFICE.

I AM now arrived at the last subject which I proposed to investigate, namely,

V. The nature of the elder's office, so far as relates to teaching, presiding, and ruling, in Christian churches.

That the churches of Christ are more in danger at the present time from degrading, than from too highly esteeming, those who are over them in the Lord, must appear to every one who has perused my former Letters with any attention, or looked

around him to see what is going on in churches. But I am not conscious of wishing to give Christian teachers any undue pre-eminence over the brethren. At no period of my life have I ever had the shadow of a pretension to clerical dignity. Nor have I possessed any principle or disposition that could lead me to give the smallest countenance to it in any human being, since the time when it pleased God to instruct me in the knowledge of the spiritual nature of Christ's kingdom. I know that, in whatever degree elders may be distinguished by their knowledge, gifts, and experience, and by their eminence in the characters which they ought to possess, they are all on a level before God with the meanest of their brethren; they must not be called Rabbi, Master, or Father, as having dominion over the consciences of their fellow Christians; they must not exercise the authority of the rulers of nations, nor assume a dictatorial and an arbitrary method of proceeding, as if they were "lords over God's heritage." On the contrary, they ought to excel in humility, to become the servants of all, in imitation of their Lord and Master, and "to be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those who oppose themselves."

All this, however, is consistent with maintaining that the elder's office is essential to the order of churches, that the work of pastors and teachers is peculiar to them, and not common to all the brethren, and that respect is due to them on account of the office which they hold, and the authority given them by the chief Shepherd. When they meet with humiliating treatment from unsubmissive and unruly brethren, were they only the sufferers, they might well bear it. But when disorder is likely to ensue, and the peace of the church is endangered, it is incumbent on them to make a steady, temperate, and prudent use of the authority which the Lord hath given them.

The Apostle Paul, on some occasions, found his authority resisted by Christian brethren, and suffered from them much ill treatment and abuse. This he bore with patience, accounting it "a small thing to be judged of man's judgment," and not regarding for his own sake how much or how little he was repected by them. Nay, so great was his Christian love and benevolence, that he wrote thus to a church who gave ear to his accusers questioning his apostolic character, "I am willing to spend and be spent for you, though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved." But while he was thus superior to the ingratitude of those who were so deeply indebted to him, and felt little for the loss of reputation among them so far as he was personally concerned, he was nevertheless deeply affected by the injury which the truth sustained, and the danger to

which they were exposed, who hearkened to the false suggestions of his enemies. In this point of view, he refutes all their calumnies, ascribes them to the influence of Satan, boasts of his authority, and magnifies his office.

While I am very far from wishing pastors and teachers to assume or affect any part of the character and work that were peculiar to Apostles, and willing that they should humble themselves in the greatest possible degree, and rise above all personal considerations in the service of Christ and his people, I am notwithstanding fully persuaded that they too ought to magnify their office, and imitate the energy and boldness, as well as the meekness and gentleness, of the Apostles. Whatever freedom they may use with what may be called their own things, the Lord's ordinance ought to be held in due estimation. And if all their endeavours tend to lessen our ideas of it, to persuade us that we may do well enough without elders, that there is little or no difference between them and the rest of the brethren, and that two believers may do all that is competent to a church with its bishops and deacons, their whole system on this head is palpably and radically at variance with the doctrine of the New Testament, in relation to churches and their office-bearers.

The promoters of this system do not admit that there is any thing in it inimical to the pastoral office; and I have no intention to challenge their sincerity. But whatever may be their design, the tendency of their doctrine is to pour contempt upon the elder's office, by leading the disciples of Christ to act in all respects as if they possessed that office, without being regularly called to it, and in this way to dispense with it altogether. Or if they shall afterwards make choice of elders, such elders can only have a nominal standing in churches, composed of persons who reckon all the brethren entitled to do every thing that belongs to the pastoral office. Some may think it expedient to give their elders a perpetual presidency, while others may suppose it better to employ occasionally a private brother in the work peculiar to overseers, were it for no other reason than to show that levelling spirit which, with high pretensions to humility, is the genuine offspring of pride, and the fruitful source of envying, strife, and confusion. It makes little difference whether pastors and teachers be actually excluded by the new plan of regulating churches, an effect which I have already proved to be inseparable from it; or whether they be appointed under such conditions as render their appointment nugatory.

It is said that "neither the imposition of hands, nor appointment by a presbytery, confer on the person appointed either a power to do something he could not do before, or an indelible

character or office. Appointment, however, is the avowed declaration and solemn ratification of a new relation formed and constituted, which did not formerly exist between the person so appointed and the church over which he is to preside. There is now a relation between teacher and taught, ruler and ruled. But the appointment confers no power of administering ordinances, as it is called, nor adds any gift. There was not an ordinance of God but he could have presided at, or did preside at, before as well as after his appointment. The power of administering any ordinance must be in the gifts and qualifications conferred on some by the Head of the church to that end. The exercise of that power, at any time, must arise from the desire of the church that it should be so; and the stated exercise of such power is conferred by the church choosing and appointing to the elder's office."

It is well known that we are all fully persuaded that an indelible office or character communicated by man, is one of the greatest absurdities that ever man devised; and that none of them affirm that gifts are conferred by ordination, if by gifts be understood qualifications or endowments. But if an office be a gift, I should think it will not be denied that the person who receives the office has a gift conferred upon him. To impute to opponents sentiments which it is known they do not entertain, and to reason against these as if they had avowed them, is uncandid, and has too much the appearance of trifling with the subject, unless it is done artfully, which I am very unwilling to suppose.

The matter of difference is as distinct from indelible character and imaginary gifts, as it is from transubstantiation or the infallibility of the church. In short, the substance of all that has been written on this point seems to be, that an ordained elder had precisely the same power in relation to the pastoral work before, as he now has after his ordination. And although this sentiment, if I understand it, refutes itself; yet, as it is the groundwork of all the present errors respecting the Lord's Supper and the elder's office, a few remarks upon it may be useful.

1. From a strong conviction that there is nothing in the ordinances of God, or in the practices of the first churches, so mystical as to be above all comprehension; or, when understood, so irreconcilable to the soundest principles of reason, as to provoke the ridicule of sober and judicious inquirers—I am disposed to examine whether any new proposal be consistent with those just ideas which all reasonable people entertain on subjects of a similar nature. Is it then a general maxim that, when a man is appointed to an office, he acquires nothing,

but remains just as he was before, without any accession of authority and influence on the one hand, or of obligation to duty on the other? Has the president of any popular society no more concern in keeping order and in regulating the affairs of the society, than he had when he was only a private member? Were this principle universally adopted, it would produce anarchy, and put an end to all rule and government among men. It would equally disturb the peace of civil society, and that of Christian assemblies.

A disciple of Christ who has hitherto been under the lawful authority of others, may become a husband, a father, and a master. Has he, in consequence of the new relations now sustained by him, no power to do any thing which he could not do before? Whatever may have been his attainments as a Christian when he was only a son and a servant, he could not then have assumed the authority and performed the duties of all those other relations. Why? Because it was impossible while he was not a master, a husband, and a father; and his attempting it, upon any occasion, could only have shown his presumption and arrogance. In like manner, no man can do the duties of the elder's office, or lawfully exercise the authority which belongs to it, till he be an elder. This reasoning, I think, is not more simple than it is conclusive.

2. If the persons who are eventually called to the office of pastors and teachers in the churches of Christ, had power to do every thing which belongs to that office while they were yet private brethren, what need is there for ordaining elders in every church? This principle supersedes the office altogether. Were it possible to show that every thing can be done without elders, the necessary consequence would be, that the office is not of Divine appointment; for each of the Lord's ordinances has its own peculiar use, and he hath not commanded any thing in vain. The deacon's office falls of course; for certainly the brethren in general were as much entitled, before ordination, to act in the capacity of deacons as in that of elders. Yet it does not appear that any did so in the church at Jerusalem before the appointment of deacons, except the Apostles, who as such were entitled to do every thing that pertained to inferior offices. This of itself is decisive proof that the work of office-bearers in the churches, can be lawfully performed only by those who are regularly called and set apart as elders and deacons.

3. It is admitted that "appointment is the avowed declaration and solemn ratification of a new relation formed and constituted, which did not formerly exist between the person so appointed and the church over which he is to preside;" and that "there is now a relation between teacher and taught, ruler and ruled."

Had it been intended to avow a principle completely the reverse of that which is sought to be established, it could not have been stated in clearer or more unequivocal terms. It is in fact my own principle, with more formality of expression than I am accustomed to use, and conceived in terms resembling the style of what is called by Presbyterians a church court. Yet it is said that the appointment confers no power of administering ordinances. What shall we make of this? Can there be a pastoral relation avowedly declared, and formed, and constituted, and solemnly ratified, where no power is given to the pastor to administer ordinances? For what purpose then was he ordained, and how shall every one under the charge of such a shepherd receive from him his portion of meat in due season?

Again, it is said that "the power of administering any ordinance must be in the gifts and qualifications conferred on some by the Head of the church." This again seems to favour the idea, that every one who thinks himself qualified may administer ordinances without the suffrage of his brethren; although it is said, "the exercise of that power at any time must arise from the desire of the church that it should be so," &c. It is thought, however, that the church may either confer the stated exercise of that power by appointing some to the elder's office, or a temporary exercise of it by one of their number who has no official character.

Now this exercise of the gifts of a private individual, confessedly not an elder, yet doing all that pertains to the elder's office, is the precise point of difference. But where shall we find an instance of the first Christians resorting to the expedient of making private brethren do all that can be done by elders? We have clear and express authority for choosing office-bearers, whose characters and work are also specified with the greatest precision. Here we tread upon sure ground. But can we suppose that Christian churches are at liberty to devise substitutes of their own invention for Divine institutions, and to give the exercise of that power, whatever it be, which God hath reserved for pastors and teachers, to another class of men, nowhere named, or described, or exemplified, throughout the whole of the New Testament? They whose pride and ambition impel them to resist this precept, "Obey them who have the rule over you," may urge this specious plea, "Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the Lord is among them. Wherefore, then, lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the Lord?"

Undoubtedly, wherever a few believers meet together, they ought to observe the ordinances of the Lord Jesus; one of them

must preside; and there can be no reason why he should not be the best qualified among them. But all this occurs daily in a Christian family without any one, till of late, having supposed that he who acts as president can do every thing that is competent to an elder of a church of Christ, and in particular that he is warranted to dispense the Lord's Supper to his family. In all social worship, order and decorum must be preserved in some way. But where the order which we see exemplified in the New Testament does not, and cannot exist, there must be a want of those privileges which are peculiar to organized bodies of Christians. To claim such privileges in a situation in which it is not the will of God that they should be enjoyed, is presumptuous; and to imagine that we possess what is equivalent to the Lord's institution of elders, while we have no elders, is fanciful, and too plainly shows that this ordinance of God is lightly esteemed, although there may be a high profession of regard to other ordinances.

Edinburgh, December 12, 1807.

IX.—ON THE NATURE OF THE ELDER'S OFFICE.

It is now time to attend to the nature of the elder's office, and respecting this it is said, that "Even those things, on account of which the elder is called pastor, are not exclusive to him, but may be performed in some degree by ordinary brethren. The peculiarity of the pastor's work does not consist in the kind of employment in which he engages, but in the degree. If he is to teach the brethren, and admonish them, and comfort them, private brethren are bound to have the word of Christ dwelling richly in them, teaching and admonishing one another—to comfort one another, to speak the truth in love, &c. If the pastor is to exercise authority, it must be by stating the mind of Christ, and requiring obedience to him; and from this brethren are not excluded. It is in reference to such rule, that all are commanded to be subject one to another. A private brother, too, can enforce his commands by the same kind of sanction as the pastor. He can refuse Christian fellowship to such as will not obey the commands of Christ."

Some found the power of a brother to administer ordinances on his gifts and qualifications, and on the call of the church; and others go so far as to approve of two believers eating the Lord's Supper even on shipboard, which is going as far as could possibly be done.

Again, some have divided a church into teachers and taught, rulers and ruled, which has the express authority of the Word of God. But others have attempted to confound this distinction, in endeavouring to show that "the peculiarity of the pastor's work does not consist in the kind of employment in which he engages, but in the degree." Among other things, this remark is applied to teaching and ruling; and it is affirmed that none of the brethren are excluded from either of these. This appears to me to me to be an error which strikes against all just ideas of the elder's office, and against the commandment of God enjoining submission to their pastors on the flocks over which the Holy Spirit hath made them overseers. It must therefore be carefully examined and refuted.

1. The description given in the assertion, of the peculiarity of the pastor's work as consisting not in kind but in degree, would be extremely unsuitable in other cases of relative obligation, with which the pastoral office may be compared. How would it do to affirm that the children of one family have the same kind of authority over each other which their father has over them all, though they must exercise it in a less degree? Priority in age and talents may give a preference to one or more of the children, and the same thing takes place among Christian brethren. But is there no difference in kind between this and the authority of the father? Are the sons of the family all fathers in a less degree? What is here affirmed, however, is equally inconsistent with proper views of the duties which churches owe to their elders, and indeed of all the relative duties which God hath enjoined.

I am not in general so much disposed to compare the authority of elders with that of civil rulers. But considering that the persons here addressed are in no danger of giving their pastors the smallest vestige of that sort of power which is exercised by the lords of the Gentiles, and considering also that others have gone before me in making this comparison, I may be allowed to remark that it is the duty of all good subjects to exert their influence on every proper occasion in using their best endeavours to keep the public peace. Shall we therefore say that the power of the magistrate differs from that of the community at large in degree only, and not in kind? Are not civil rulers, in distinction from all other men, "the powers that be, which are ordained of God?" And would not usurping their power in any degree, be accounted, in the same degree, rebellion against the state?

2. Let it be admitted, for the sake of argument, that every brother in a church may exercise pastoral authority in some degree. Let it next be supposed that a church thus ruled

consists of two hundred members, of whom one hundred are males, and that it has also two elders. The small degree of authority possessed by each of the hundred individuals, if it be meant to exclude females, might probably very much exceed in the aggregate that which would remain in the hands of the two overseers, if the latter could be supposed to have any influence in a society where they were overborne by a hundred rulers. Nay, one of the hundred might become an overmatch for the two elders, and convince them that any attempt to exercise their just authority for the good of those under their charge would be of no avail. It frequently happens, I doubt not, in churches as well as in civil society, that they who make the loudest cry in favour of liberty, when they gain power and pre-eminence, are far from giving to others that liberty which they demanded for themselves. And we know also that the multitude, when it seizes the supreme power, is the greatest tyrant that ever breathed.

3. It is farther argued, with an appearance of Scripture authority, that because brethren are commanded to teach and to admonish one another, and to be subject one to another, therefore the duties of teaching and ruling, which are generally thought peculiar to the elder's office, may be performed in some degree by all the brethren.

Private teaching is unquestionably the duty of every one who is capable in any measure to instruct and to edify. This is no encroachment on the elder's office, for aged women are commanded to teach younger persons of their own sex; and surely we cannot suppose that females who are not suffered to speak in the church, as all the brethren may, can yet be warranted to perform in any degree the work that is peculiar to elders.

Public teaching is a great and leading part of the pastoral work, for which elders must be qualified by being "apt to teach, and able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince gainsayers." Mutual exhortation is the province of the brethren; and the more they dwell on practical subjects, without attempting to investigate doctrinal points, the more will they grow in grace and edify the whole church. They ought indeed briefly to state the motives of the Gospel, by which only we can be led to perform the duties which they urge upon us. But practical exhortations may regard the truths as well as the duties of Christianity. They teach us when they "speak the truth in love," although they should communicate no additional information, nor do any thing more than beseech us to attend to that which we already know, and move our hearts and consciences by an affectionate recommendation of some

duty which we might be apt to forget, or by a warning against some evil into which we might be in danger of falling.

Private brethren therefore may teach, and exhort, and admonish; but in so doing they assume no part of the elder's office, if they know their own proper sphere. The distinction between teachers and those who are taught is clearly marked in the Scriptures, as well as the duties respectively incumbent on each. The designations given to the former are exclusively theirs; and no instance can be produced of the brethren in general being called elders, pastors, teachers, overseers, the angels of the churches, or those who have the rule over them. When the brethren are in the humble spirit of disciples, they will readily admit that they cannot teach and admonish officially, or authoritatively, as pastors undoubtedly may. There will be no occasion to urge upon them a self-evident truth which is expressly declared by the Apostle Paul, namely, that "all are not teachers." They know that "if they be many masters, or teachers, they will receive the greater condemnation." And when it is otherwise, there is more evidence of pride and self-confidence, than of zeal for the truth, which is never at variance with humility.

Again, with respect to the exercise of authority, which has been represented as in some degree the prerogative of all the brethren, an unaccountable prejudice seems to have been shown against the respect due to the pastoral office. The esteem, and honour, and subjection, which are due to elders, are surely due to them as such, and consequently to no other persons. Considering elders merely as men of age and experience, which the designation imports, how shall we give this peculiar respect to persons who are young and inexperienced? Or can a son entertain or express filial respect and deference towards one who is not his father? Esteem and subjection may be due on other accounts. But when a particular ground of these is specified, as in the case of pastors and teachers, they cannot be due in this manner where the office and character do not exist. If this simple and incontrovertible truth were held and acted upon, it would put an end to all rivalship between elders and brethren, or at least to every specious plea for it, and it would check the unruly efforts of aspiring minds, which are excited and encouraged by the opposite sentiment, and are too often fatal to the peace of churches.

It appears to me wonderful that a precept enjoining upon all the brethren subjection one to another, should be considered as authorizing each to claim a portion of that rule which belongs to elders. Such an extraordinary conclusion was the less to be expected, because their mutual subjection as brethren, in all

respects on a footing of equality with each other, is distinguished from that which is due to elders, whether officially so called, or aged men, both of whom probably are intended.

The passage runs thus, "Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder; yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility; for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble," 1 Pet. v. 5. What is the object here? Is it not humility rendered visible, as a garment with which a man is clothed, by the peculiar subjection of the younger to the elder, and by the subjection of all to one another? But it has been imagined that this humiliating law has warranted, in the exercise of authority, the rule of all the brethren, and "a right to enforce their commands by the same kind of sanction as the pastor!" They proceed as if the commandment had been to govern and not to submit, forgetting that mutual subjection never can imply superiority in any of the parties on whom it is enjoined, and that where submission alone is due on all sides, none of them have a right to exercise authority, rule, or precedence, in any respect whatever. It is truly lamentable that a Divine precept, enjoining humility in the most forcible terms, and evidently intended for the purpose not only of preventing brethren from assuming a superiority, but of producing universal subjection one to another, should be so explained as to support the claims of pride, by making all the brethren share in the official authority of those who are over them in the Lord!

"The sanction" giving to private brethren "a right to enforce their commands," is that of "refusing Christian fellowship to such as will not obey the commands of Christ." But in a church, where only we can compare the authority of a private brother with that of an elder, neither the one nor the other can sanction his commands in this way, without the consent of the whole body; and when we deal with the conscience of a brother, it appears to me that threatening to get him excommunicated tends more to irritate than to convince. Some cases indeed require immediate exclusion. But every one is not a complete judge of these; and in general we are most likely to succeed in our attempts to reclaim an offending brother, when we "beseech him by the mercies of God, and by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." And if it be necessary to alarm his fears, this may be done more effectually by reminding him of the judgment to come, when "the Lord will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts."

Edinburgh, December 19, 1807.

X.—ON THE NATURE OF THE ELDER'S OFFICE.

HAVING answered at full length the arguments of those who endeavour to diminish the lawful power of elders, and to throw a great proportion of it into the hands of private brethren, it is now my wish to abandon controversy, at least with individual persons, and to give a simple view of the subject from the Word of God. But as several of the things which might have been stated in this form have been anticipated in the preceding pages, I shall give only a brief summary of the leading particulars.

1. Allow me to call the attention of my fellow Christians to some of the qualifications of an elder which bear upon this subject. He must be "apt to teach," both in relation to "edifying the body of Christ," for which purpose Jesus, when he ascended upon high, "gave pastors and teachers," Eph. iv. 12., and that he may be able to preach the Gospel to the world, and "to convince gainsayers," Tit. i. 9. It is farther required that he should be of a blameless character, and have a good report of them who are without, that his public usefulness may not be prevented or marred by the inconsistency which might be discerned between his conduct and his doctrine. He is likewise to be "one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity," as an essential requisite to show that he is qualified for "taking care of the church of God." Many other qualifications are stated in which a Christian elder ought to excel, and also this distinguishing one, "Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride, he fall into the condemnation of the devil." 1 Tim. iii. 1—8. Tit. i. 5—10.

When we see an inspired Apostle stating so carefully and so minutely the qualifications of an elder, those which are less or more possessed by every believer, and those which peculiarly fit him for being an acceptable public teacher, and for conducting and regulating the concerns of the church over which he is chosen to preside, we must surely perceive that the office is not of small account, and that he only who possesseth in some good measure the character laid down by the Apostle, and who is regularly called and appointed, can lawfully be employed in doing the work of a pastor. Were it otherwise, I could see no advantage arising to Christian assemblies from the description given of the men who ought to be ordained elders in every church, nor any meaning in those qualifications for public usefulness which comparatively very few possess. Why are so many

distinguishing characteristics required in order to fit a man for teaching and ruling in a church, if all his work may be done by any brother?

2. The designations given to those office-bearers, and the duties which they are called to perform, agree with the qualifications already mentioned, and show the peculiarity of their work.

They are *Elders*, probably in allusion to the elders of Israel; men of wisdom and experience, whose knowledge and gifts are matured, and who are fitted for bearing rule.

Pastors, or shepherds, who care for their flocks, who lead, and nourish, and protect, and feed them. Thus elders or pastors are commanded to "feed the flock of God," 1 Pet. v. 2. "To feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood," Acts xx. 28.

Teachers. Elders and other authorized preachers of the Gospel are exclusively so named, since extraordinary gifts and offices ceased. The former "labour in the Word and doctrine," and instruct the disciples both in relation to the faith and practice of the Gospel. Those of them who are faithful, regard the charge given to an evangelist, "Preach the word. Be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and doctrine." And they teach or make disciples, by preaching the Word of life to those who are dead in sins.

Overseers, which is the literal meaning of the word translated bishops, as in Phil. i. 1., and other places. This designation seems to have been always peculiar to ordinary pastors and teachers; at least I do not recollect that it was ever applied to any other, except the Lord himself, who is called the bishop or overseer of our souls, though undoubtedly the Apostles acted as overseers, not of one church only, but of all the churches. The term is frequently used in relation to elders, and in conformity to it they are required to "take the oversight of the flock, not by constraint, but willingly," &c. 1 Pet. v. 1—5, evidently showing that a charge is committed to them, and that care and diligent inspection are necessary, while "they watch for the souls of the brethren as those that must give account."

The Angels of the Churches. This is the designation given to the elders of the seven churches which were in Asia; and those angels were represented by seven stars in the right hand of him who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty, Rev. i. 16, 20. The meaning of the term is messengers; and although not immediate messengers like the Apostles, who saw the Lord, yet they too are sent by him "for the perfecting of the saints for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." And they are the messengers of the churches, as

being employed to present their supplications before God, while they pray as the mouth of the congregation to which they minister.

Those who have the rule over the churches, Heb. xiii.17. Pastors are likewise said to be "over the brethren in the Lord," 1 Thess. v. 12. *He that ruleth* is commanded to rule with diligence, Rom. xii. 8; and I do not suppose that I exalt them to the level of inspired evangelists when I affirm that they ought to regard this charge, "These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee," Tit. ii. 15.

They are not, indeed, arbitrary rulers, nor entitled to govern according to their own will. The elders who rule well, 1 Tim. v. 17, "preach not themselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and themselves the servants of the disciples for Jesus' sake." They require obedience to no laws except those contained in the Word of God, and they wish above all things to see the consciences of their brethren immediately subject to the Lord Jesus Christ. But this is equally true with respect to all other relative duties. No husband, or father, or master, or magistrate, has a right to command any thing opposite to the will of God; yet they have a just authority, which duty requires them uniformly to maintain. Nor is it any argument against their authority, that all Christian obedience must be performed "with good-will, as to the Lord, and not to men." For upon that ground servants might refuse to obey their masters, while every one may easily perceive that want of subjection to masters is disobedience to Christ. See Eph. vi. 5—8.

It would be well if those who resist the authority of elders on the principle which has been mentioned, never opposed them except when they attempt to put their own yoke upon the necks of the disciples. But brethren are sometimes unruly because they are not willing to take upon them the yoke of Jesus; and they frequently endeavour to excuse their contempt of the authority which the Lord hath given to pastors, by affirming that they are subject only to the Lord himself! Churches may be obliged by a principle of conscience to dissent from the judgment of their elders. But the authority of the latter in all lawful matters cannot be called in question, without unfair attempts to evade the plain meaning of several texts of Scripture, and forgetting that the one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy, hath instituted order and government in his churches.

In stating these characters, designations, and duties of the *ministers of Christ*, a term which, though applicable to the

Apostles, and though usurped by national clergymen, fitly expresses the character and work of ordinary pastors, I know not whether I pass a more severe censure on myself, conscious as I am of great deficiency in the duties of this important office; or on those who pay little or no respect to the office itself, and do what in them lies to frustrate all the efforts of the ministers of God to labour with any hope of success, or to rule with the concurrence and support of their brethren in the churches. Without this, it is not in the power of man to rule.

3. The peculiarity of the work of elders, and the distinction between them and the people among whom they labour, strikingly appear from the duties enjoined upon the latter. These are honour, the temporal support of their pastors, and subjection to their authority.

Honour. That peculiar respect and deference are due to Christian teachers, is not merely a conclusion drawn justly from the characters and from the work ascribed to them in the Word of God. This is a duty expressly commanded, and in terms as plain and indisputable as those which convince every one that honour is due to husbands, parents, masters, civil rulers, and aged persons. The Apostle Paul thus enjoins it, "We beseech you, brethren, to know them who labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake," 1 Thess. v. 12, 13. Very high esteem and affection are therefore due on the part of the church, and that for their work's sake, or because their pastors labour among them, and are over them in the Lord, and admonish them.

"The elders that rule well are to be accounted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine," 1 Tim. v. 17. This, indeed, includes a supply of their temporal wants, as we see from the following verse, and from other passages of Scripture. But it is impossible that such supply could have been termed *honour*, had it not been considered as a substantial evidence of that distinguished respect which is due to elders. I am not forgetting another commandment, "to honour widows that are widows indeed," 1 Tim. v. 3. This proceeds upon a similar ground; for aged widows who possessed the characters mentioned in verses 9, 10, were entitled to a comfortable subsistence, and to peculiar respect from all the brethren.

The first commandment of the second table of the law is, "Honour thy father and thy mother." And unquestionably it obliges children "to show piety at home, and to requite their parents," by giving them temporal support when they have

occasion for it, 1 Tim. v. 4. Matt. xv. 3—5. But who will affirm that it does not likewise include the honour, respect, and deference, which are due to parents?

The estimation in which pastors ought to be held, appears from another apostolic injunction, "Against an elder receive not an accusation but before two or three witnesses," 1 Tim. v. 19. For although every Christian brother has a right to be so treated, yet this being particularly commanded in relation to elders, evidently shows that singular care ought to be taken to avoid injuring their characters, and that they are entitled to peculiar respect.

Temporal Support. The reason given for the precept already quoted, "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour," is this, "For the Scriptures saith thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn, and the labourer is worthy of his reward." Although there were not many other things to the same purpose in the New Testament, this single verse is conclusive. In all cases wherein an elder or other preacher of the Gospel is prevented from earning a comfortable maintenance for himself and his dependents, by labouring in the Word and Doctrine, or from circumstances for which he cannot be blamed, he has an undoubted right to be supported, in whole or in part, as there may be occasion for it, by the church among whom he labours, if it be in their power to do so. At present, I have no concern with the question when an elder ought, or ought not, to be provided for by the church. But, when it is necessary, that which is given him is not to be considered as mere bounty. It is justly due to him, and he has the same right to it as a labourer has to his reward, when he has performed the task assigned to him.

Now, I cannot conceive why there should be a claim of right for the reward of such an honourable service, if those who are so employed are not eminently distinguished from the brethren in general, who are all their debtors, and debtors to an amount which they can never pay, unless we should suppose that temporal emoluments bear any proportion to spiritual consolations. See Rom. xv. 25—27. Philem. ver. 18, 19.

Subjection to the authority of Pastors—This is implied in the designations given to elders, and in some of the duties which they are called to perform, both of which have been already stated. But there is likewise an express commandment to this effect, "Obey them who have the rule over you, and submit yourselves," Heb. xiii. 17. And of similar import I understand this other exhortation to be, "Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder," 1 Pet. v. 5. For it follows immediately after the Apostle Peter's address to elders, and re-

quires submission to those who are officially so called in a most beautiful and conciliating way. Not obedience to hard task-masters, or arbitrary rulers claiming lordship, but that submission which the young, if they be sober-minded and self-diffident, as they ought to be, spontaneously yield to aged men, as their acknowledged superiors in maturity of judgment, and in wisdom and experience. If it should be admitted that aged persons in general are meant in this passage, that is not inconsistent with considering it as applicable to elders by office, who have the oversight of the flock of God, and whose labours will be in vain, if the flock be unsubmissive, self-confident, and unteachable.

The other passage in Heb. xiii. is more forcibly expressed, and with so much clearness that it cannot be misunderstood. It teaches us that there are persons in churches who have the rule over them, and that it is the duty of the brethren to obey such, and to submit themselves; the injunction being thus repeated, that the necessity of attending to it might be the more apparent. And it is enforced by an argument which ought to be deeply felt both by pastors and their flocks, "For they watch for your souls as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy and not with grief, for that is unprofitable for you."

If then all the brethren in churches are bound by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, to yield obedience and submission to those who have the rule over them, how can it be supposed that every one may preside and govern, or that each may do that which is right in his own eyes, as if it had been the will of God that, of all the societies of which we have heard in heaven or in the earth, the hosts of angels and the tribes of men, churches of Christ, and they only, should have no order, subjection, or government!

Let it be carefully observed, that my object is not merely that of persuading the disciples of Christ to avoid the disorderly practice of keeping the Christian feast without elders. They may go to an opposite extreme, either from a sincere and laudable desire of obtaining that ordinance, or from the same loose principle about the order of churches which determines others to supersede the Divine institution of pastors and teachers.

Some have rashly and unwarrantably asserted that, wherever a few disciples meet together, there will always be among themselves those gifts which are necessary for edifying the body of Christ; as if the Lord did not bestow every blessing according to his own sovereign pleasure, or as if those talents which may in some degree be possessed, were to be matured miraculously in a few days or months, without labour, and

study, and long-continued zealous and diligent practice. It is easy to see how this will operate in calling men to the elder's office, who are greatly deficient in the necessary qualifications, and whose characters do not command respect.

The same thing occurs when elders are chosen from a premature and an intemperate desire of becoming an organized body, or a complete and independent church, capable of observing all the ordinances of the Lord Jesus Christ. When a considerable number of disciples are collected in one place, undoubtedly their obtaining pastors and teachers ought to be a matter of deep concern, and of frequent and earnest supplication before God; and it is likewise their duty to avoid an extreme degree of scrupulosity in judging of the qualifications of those whom they call to the elder's office. There are no perfect men even in churches; and if persons among themselves, or who can be brought from another quarter, possess in some good measure every qualification required in the epistles to Timothy and Titus, this is all that in most cases can reasonably be expected. But if they totally want some of the characters, and are far from being eminent in any of them, to give such persons the oversight of the flock, will prove an injury to all the parties concerned. This is in reality the most successful method of rendering the elder's office a mere useless form, and of exposing it to ridicule and contempt.

It is not unlikely that some of my good friends may consider my attempt to magnify the elder's office as not very consistent with modesty, humility, and self-denial, virtues in which the servants of the Lord ought peculiarly to excel. And I shall most readily confess that if my motives be a love of power, a desire of self-exaltation, and a preferring of the honour which cometh from men to that which cometh from God only, my attempt is highly criminal in the sight of him who trieth the hearts. But if I have given a just and scriptural view of the subject, and have set the office no higher than God himself hath placed it, by what rule can any one affirm that pride must be the ruling motive?

"I am not persuaded that stating the just claims of persons who have the oversight of churches, is less consistent with humility, than it would be to bring forward those of any other description of men to whom God hath given power and authority. Suppose for instance that the subject had been paternal rights, and that I had treated these as nature dictates, and as the Word of God expressly commands, could my opponents have said with any colour of justice, that, because I am a father, pride must have been my motive? It may be remarked, however, that an elder

who finds it necessary to assert and defend his own authority, is in no enviable condition. This would not occur from the indiscretion of one or two unruly members, were the church in general to do their duty.

I have long been convinced that subordination, which universally prevails, (save only when lawless men rebel, and give to the astonished world an awful example of human nature without the restraints of government,) is intended by the Lord of all, chiefly for the good of those who are placed in a state of subjection; and this principle, which I am sure is just, applies equally to congregations of believers, and to all worldly societies, from the smallest family to the most potent and extensive empire. Am I then become the enemy of my fellow disciples in the churches, because I tell them this truth, which ought rather to be gratifying to those who enjoy a humbling sense of God's pardoning mercy, namely, that they consult their own happiness by a placid and willing subjection to all who have a rightful authority over them, whether in the churches of Christ, or in the world at large?

To seek pre-eminence for its own sake, is mean and contemptible. This is no part of true Christian dignity; but, on the contrary, shows an abject state of mind, incompatible with living by the faith of Christ as redeemed sinners, and with enjoying the hope of glory, honour, and immortality. But when believers of the Gospel, in the true spirit of Christianity, exercise lawful authority for the purposes for which God hath given it, they glorify him, and perform, in many cases, a most laborious and self-denied office of love towards the objects of their care and government.

Edinburgh, December 26, 1807.

XI.—RULE OF UNITY IN CHURCHES.

Mr Ewing of Glasgow has lately published his sentiments respecting several of the subjects treated of in the preceding letters; and, as he has written against those whom I have taken the liberty to censure, it seems necessary to make some remarks on his leading principles, that our respective friends may know how far we are agreed. This shall be done with all possible brevity; for although it appears to me, that in some points he has gone to an unwarrantable extreme in refuting palpable errors, yet they who have any tolerable understanding of the doctrine of the New Testament, are less in danger from

his theory, than from that of his opponents. The evil among those of the present day who espouse Congregational principles, is that of carrying independence with respect to churches, to an extent which threatens not only the order, the tranquillity, and happiness, but the very existence of churches.

So far as he has endeavoured, in a Scriptural manner, to counteract an evil fraught with consequences so alarming, I bid him God speed, and in many things he has performed this task with great ability. I should have been highly gratified if it had been possible for me to express a general approbation of his work, because I esteem his character and his talents. Nothing but a sense of duty, therefore, could have led me to find fault. He may feel wounded; but he knows how to estimate "the wounds of a friend;" and I mean to decline all matters of difference, except those immediately connected with the subject in hand.

It is unnecessary to give a farther detail of the things in which we agree, because these will be apparent to every one who peruses our respective publications. I may, however, be allowed the satisfaction of transcribing one of his remarks, which meets with my full approbation. It is this, "Such is the disposition of mankind to go to extremes, that some who have burst the fetters of superstition, are ready to use unwarrantable freedom with regulations of every kind." This is a good description of the leading cause of all the real evils censured in Mr Ewing's Statement, and in my Letters. But he and I ought to beware of falling into the error which we condemn; for that is likewise one of the common infirmities of human nature.

With respect to the rule of unity in church order, it seems doubtful whether Mr E. admits that there is in the New Testament any fixed and positive rule with respect to the order of Christian churches. Several of his remarks are of this complexion, as well as the indecisive manner in which he gives his own opinion in relation to particular things, or rather the loose and undetermined state to which he reduces them. His first sentence, indeed, is such as might have been expected from him, and gives reason to hope that he will hear the voice of the good Shepherd. "The Word of God," he declares, "is the only authority which we are bound to obey in our Christian fellowship." This is a most excellent principle. It is good in itself, and it leads to all that is well pleasing in the sight of God. But then, he adds, "Our heavenly Father has not thought it proper to give a minute detail of the formation and the practice of his primitive churches. The history of the Acts of the

Apostles is exceedingly short, and the facts which are stated are only a selection. The apostolic epistles throw light on the subject, rather by occasional hints and allusions, than by direct narrative or full description. They were originally letters of business, most of them addressed to particular churches in particular situations; and we shall hardly be secure from mistake, as to their meaning and application, unless we carefully attend to the times and circumstances in which they severally appear to have been written."

Mr E., I doubt not, has some method of qualifying these assertions. But I shall hazard no conjecture about it, lest I should make an excuse for him which he himself will not admit. He seems to represent the rule which God hath given us in his Word, either as deficient in minuteness of detail, or as having been intended to leave much to our discretion; and the brevity of the history of the Acts, as but sparingly supplied by the apostolic epistles, which he considers as letters of business. Not surely business relating to the concerns of this mortal life, as the expression at first sight would seem to denote. But such peculiar business, I suppose, with respect to the spiritual happiness of each of the churches, as prevented direct narrative or full description regarding Christian fellowship, and left room for throwing light on the subject only by occasional hints and allusions. To these remarks I answer, that, whether the instruction communicated in the Word of God be occasional, or directly intended, and much of it is of the former description, it is equally incumbent on us, in both cases, to hear and to obey. Then shall we know, experimentally, that God's rule is perfect, and that no farther details were necessary.

It does not appear to me that the Apostles adapted the law of Christian fellowship to particular churches in particular situations. The Apostle Paul taught the same doctrine "every where, in every church." Times and circumstances may in some cases determine the duty of individual believers; but the ordinances of Divine worship, and the manner of observing these, are the same in every church, in every country, and in every age.

I shall only quote another passage of the same description. "If Jesus Christ," he says, "had intended by the unity of his disciples a unity of church order, he would have described it as minutely as Moses does the construction of the tabernacle and the rites of the passover, or any other ordinance. This, however, he has not done." If Mr E. has not intended, by these words, to express a doubtful state of mind in relation to the whole worship, discipline, and government of churches,

which may be all included in the general term order, candour itself will admit that they are liable to such interpretation, whatever may have been the real design of the writer.

He denies that a unity of church order has been established by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ. Consequently it is a matter of expediency, which may be arranged by different churches, according to their own ideas of fitness and propriety; and may be suited to all the variety of times, circumstances, and opportunities, and perhaps to the prevailing fashions of the countries where their lot is cast. The reason which he gives for this unsettled state of church order is the want, in the New Testament, of that precise and minute description of ordinances which characterised the institutions of Moses.

No person, I suppose, will affirm that the ordinances of the New Testament are as numerous, extensive, and complicated, as were those appointed under the former dispensation. The worship of Christian churches excels in purity, spirituality, and simplicity. The ordinances are few in number, and not incumbered with many forms, nor accompanied with outward pomp and splendour, but most strikingly expressive of the truth by which we are saved. This truth, before the Messiah came, may be said to have been concealed under a load of ceremonies. These were shadows; the substance is now come; it appears in all its glory in Christ crucified; and Gospel ordinances set forth the testimony of God, not as dark and fleeting shadows of future good, but as clear, and permanent, and edifying representations of the accomplished purpose of Divine grace.

There was no occasion, therefore, to give an ample specification of forms and ceremonies, when these were to be abrogated, and nothing was to come in their place but what was simple, and level to the capacity of the least of those who are taught of God. There are only two New Testament ordinances which are symbolical or figurative, as explained in Letter VI. No person can say, with truth, that Baptism and the Lord's Supper are not specified with sufficient clearness to make every believer understand their nature and their form; and both of them are enjoined on the disciples of Jesus Christ in terms so express and decisive, that no doubt ought to remain of its being their bounden duty to observe them. Nor is there any ordinance for which we have not the most satisfactory authority, in the form of precept or example, either of which is decisive.

It is not, however, my own opinion, that Mr E. holds so loose a principle, to the extent of his own words fairly quoted and explained; though it appeared necessary to reply to him in that

view, for the sake of others, whose scepticism may be promoted by his very unguarded manner of writing on this subject. Had his real sentiments been expressed in the passage under consideration, he could not have blamed others though they might choose to observe Divine ordinances in a different way from that which he approves; nor could he on this head have appealed to the Scriptures as the test of truth. On the principle for which he seems to contend, any other statement might be as good as his, and neither this nor that would be entitled to claim the preference.

We have the example of the first Christian church, the pattern which ought to be followed by all other churches, for "continuing steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine, and in the fellowship, and in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers." This ascertains the public ordinances in which the churches of God, resembling those which in Judea were in Christ Jesus, ought to have fellowship every Lord's day, as completely as if volumes had been written upon the subject. But we are not informed whether they began and concluded the public service with prayer or praise; what were the stated hours of their social worship on the first day of the week, or on other days; to what extent the Law and the Prophets were read; nor how many pastoral sermons, or brotherly exhortations, were delivered on such occasions, &c. All these, being matters in which no church walking in the fear of God can be supposed to go far wrong, require no Divine precept or example, and may be settled in the way that seems most consistent with propriety and decorum; and some of them may be regulated as will best suit the convenience of the greater part of the church.

If Mr E.'s opposition to a unity of church order has for its object merely such things as have been mentioned, the dispute is at an end. Only he will permit me to affirm that there may be varieties in some such particulars, where there is perfect unity in the order of churches; and there seems to be no propriety in contrasting the want of such detailed accounts of the proceedings of the first churches, with the minute descriptions of the temple and its ordinances. Every thing that is necessary to regulate the conduct of New Testament churches, is stated with precision and clearness, equal to that which we perceive in the law of Moses. To think otherwise, is a palpable mistake, and throws a reflection on "HIM, who was counted worthy of more glory than Moses." The brevity and simplicity of the laws of Christ, instead of being defects, are great advantages, rendering them more intelligible, and less burdensome to the memory, than the numerous and long descriptions of rites and ceremonies under the former dispensation.

In whatever extent it may be supposed that matters are left to the voluntary decision of every church, one would expect that, in all cases where we *have* example or precept, the disciples of Christ would yield to the authority of God thus interposed. But, alas! it frequently happens that the things which are most clearly revealed, are most pertinaciously disputed. What is the real cause of this opposition? Were I to affirm that it arises from prejudice, I should be thought uncharitable. And yet they who argue against some of the practices followed by the apostolic churches, do not in general attempt to conceal their unqualified disapprobation of those practices. So great is their aversion towards them, that no evidence can convince them of their Divine original.

Edinburgh, January 2, 1808.

XII.—A PLURALITY OF ELDERS IN CHURCHES.

Mr Ewing has endeavoured to show that a plurality of *Bishops*, the term which he uniformly prefers, is altogether unnecessary, and rather inexpedient and hurtful; and it is likely that I should not have disturbed him with a reply, had he fairly acknowledged that the Apostles ordained elders in every church, Acts xiv. 23; and that a law is given to the same effect, which is evidently intended to continue to the latest ages, Tit. i. 5, compared with 2 Tim. ii. 2. For then he could only have urged against the practice of having two or more bishops in one church—the difficulty of obtaining men qualified for the duties of the office, which frequently proves an insurmountable objection—and perhaps some prudential reasons, which might not have appeared equally conclusive to us both.

But his attempt, however extraordinary it may appear, is that of seriously offering arguments to convince us that the apostolic churches in general were each of them under the oversight of one single bishop; and that, too, after showing in a judicious and satisfactory manner that gifts, in the New Testament, not always as he affirms, but generally, mean supernatural endowments, immediately communicated by the Spirit of God; that gifts abounded in all the primitive churches; and that there is good reason to suppose that bishops were frequently selected from among those gifted brethren.

The supposition just mentioned, however, must be qualified by remarking that prophets and evangelists, who filled superior offices, could not be made overseers of particular churches;

at least there is no instance of any such person having become a pastor, or of a pastor having become a deacon; and it seems unnatural to suppose either the one or other. We can more easily conceive that a deacon might be ordained an elder, or that it might please God to qualify and send out an elder or a deacon as an evangelist. This is not a mere supposition, for it was realized in the case of Stephen, and in that of Philip.

It appears singular to conclude, without the express authority of the Word of God, that, where there were many persons eminently qualified, only one elder was almost uniformly ordained by the Apostles of our Lord, who knew well how to respect the gifts which he ascended up on high to bestow; and how needful they were, in all their variety of exercise, for edifying the body of Christ. Nay, Mr E. does not admit that there was so much as one elder, or bishop, to use his own term, in any of the apostolic churches except at Philippi, and in the seven Asiatic churches, and at Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch.

The above hint, in relation to the importance and necessity of various gifts being brought into exercise, is sufficient to give some idea of the wisdom of God in appointing more than one person to take the oversight of his flock, when they can be obtained, a subject on which I do not mean to enlarge. All that I intend is to show that Mr E. has not disproved the fact; and consequently that we have the uniform example of the first churches for a plurality of elders in each congregation, so far as their example is recorded.

He affirms that by elders we are generally to understand experienced believers, the first-fruits, the gifted brethren, out of which class office-bearers were chosen, both bishops and deacons. It is true he admits that bishops are sometimes called elders. His words are, "Because bishops and deacons were selected from among the elders, they are sometimes spoken of under that general name. But the terms elders is by no means confined to them, nor indeed to office at all. This is manifest from the transitions which we meet with from the elder to the younger, and from one sex to the other. Thus, 1 Tim. v. 1, Rebuke not an elder," &c.

Certainly the word elder signifies a man of age and experience, and is used in that sense in the passage referred to, and in 1 Pet. v. 5, though not to the exclusion of elders by office. But although, in the words quoted, he owns that bishops are sometimes called elders, yet he does not admit that this is a distinctive term; for he gives the same name to deacons, of which there is not one example in all the New Testament! And in almost every passage where the designation occurs, he has laboured with all his might to show that bishops are not intended.

The passages of Scripture where the ordination of elders, pastors, or bishops, is mentioned, are so plain, and so decisively expressed, that Mr E. could not give them another turn by any criticism, or by attempting a new translation. He has therefore had recourse to an avowed interpolation, which, to be sure, is better than if it had been secretly imposed upon us. His amended version of the two passages is this, The Apostles "ordained elders" to be bishops and deacons "in every church;" and Titus was commanded to "ordain elders" to be bishops and deacons "in every city." After all, what does he gain as to his main point? Still, bishops were to be ordained in every church, and in every city; that is, more than one in each congregation. If he could have reduced the word from the plural to the singular number, those texts would have answered his purpose without an interpolation, by which they are rather spoiled; for even Apostles, with all their supernatural powers, could not have ordained two or more elders to be one bishop. This is a miracle which never was nor could be performed; for instead of increasing, it would have diminished God's appointed means for the edification of churches.

Mr E. can have no other reason for denying that the word elder expresses an official character, than his strong desire to prove that the office was generally filled by one person in each of the apostolic churches; the designation elder being more frequently applied than any other, especially when the plural number is used. It is surely an appellation expressive of age, wisdom, and experience; and always conveying the idea of a man who is held in considerable estimation, whose character is established, and to whose advice and authority others are willing to be subject.

The elders of Israel were the judges and rulers of the land. So was it also in the cities and provinces of other countries, as we are informed in the history of the Old Testament. The Apostles, on some occasions, applied to themselves this honourable designation; and in heaven itself we hear of "four-and-twenty elders, sitting upon four-and-twenty seats, clothed in white raiment, and having on their heads crowns of gold;" by which is evidently meant that they hold a distinguished place among the redeemed company. And they are farther represented, together with the "four living creatures," as leading the song of praise which shall resound through all the mansions of the blessed for ever and ever. The Apostle John also "beheld in the midst of these elders a lamb as it had been slain." What objection, then, can there be against applying this designation to the overseers of churches, except that it is a more honourable one than any of them deserve?

The authorities already mentioned, are completely sufficient to decide the matter in question. But others may be adduced. Mr Ewing himself admits that the saints in Christ Jesus at Philippi had a plurality of bishops and deacons, Phil. i. 1; though not without many conjectures why that church had more bishops than any other! And he takes notice of Paul sending for the elders of the church at Ephesus. But it seems to have escaped him that the design of the Apostle was to instruct them in the duties of their office; for in all the Word of God there is not a more solemn and affecting charge given to men who had the oversight of the flock of God.

He sets before them his own example as a zealous and faithful minister of Christ. "He takes them to record that he was pure from the blood of all men, affirming that he had not shunned to declare to them all the counsel of God." He then earnestly beseeches them to "take heed to themselves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Spirit had made them overseers; to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." He warns them of the danger to which they would be exposed from false teachers, some of whom were to arise among themselves. A most pathetic admonition immediately follows. "Therefore watch, and remember, that, by the space of three years, I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears;" and after affectionately "commending them to God, and to the word of his grace," he calls them to imitate his example in his freedom from covetousness, and in his labouring for the purpose of ministering to his own temporal wants, and those of his fellow-travellers, and that he might give to the poor; encouraging them in "so labouring that they might support the weak," by the gracious "words of the Lord Jesus, who said, It is more blessed to give than to receive." Acts xx. 17—36.

Is it possible that any unprejudiced person can read this most suitable, and energetic, and overpowering address, without perceiving that the Apostle speaks to men in office? This indeed is expressly declared; for he affirms that the Holy Spirit had made them overseers over the flock of God at Ephesus. But although the word overseers is the same which elsewhere is rendered bishops, Mr E. refuses to acknowledge them as such. They were however acknowledged by God the Father, to whom the Apostle commended them; by Jesus, who had purchased with his own blood the church which they were commanded to feed; by the Holy Spirit, who had made them bishops or overseers; and by the chief of all the Apostles, who treated them as his fellow-labourers.

A similar remark occurs, when we attend to the Apostle

Paul's directions concerning the ordination of overseers, in his epistles to Timothy and Titus. The same persons who are denominated elders, Tit. i. 5, are described, and their qualifications specified, under the name of bishops or overseers, ver. 7. "For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee. If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children, not accused of riot, or unruly. For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God," &c. And it is not more certain that bishops are intended when pastors or they who rule are named, than it is that elders who rule well, and who labour in the word and doctrine, are bishops or overseers.

Other instances might still be given of elders officially so called. Such as—Those commanded "to feed the flock of God," 1 Pet. v. 2; this being unquestionably the work of bishops.—"The elders of the church," James v. 14. If they were not official men, how could they be denominated the elders of the church? This, by the way, proves also that it was a common thing for a church to have elders. "The elders that rule well," 1 Tim. v. 17. Were any other than pastors or overseers entitled to rule? The elders of the church of Jerusalem are frequently mentioned, particularly in Acts xv., where they are distinguished from the Apostles, and from the brethren or the whole church, ver. 4, 22, 23. There is no instance of such a distinction as this when office-bearers are not intended. It is the same as that mentioned in Phil. i. 1, where the word bishop is used.

Mr E. is not to be blamed for using any of the designations given in Scripture to the elders of Christian churches. But I regret that he so frequently repeats the term bishop, a term which has no meaning in our language, and therefore is generally conceived to have some such import as when it is applied to dignified clergymen, who imitate the splendour of the Levitical priesthood, and are spiritual lords in a worldly kingdom. * If he aspire not to the bishop's office, in a sense resembling that which is commonly affixed to it, he will henceforth, I trust, not only avoid this evil, but abstain from all appearance of it. Would it not be more becoming to give an English translation of the Greek word, and to call those who labour in the word and doctrine in the churches overseers, or overseer, if he will have only one in each congregation, and then the designation which the Spirit of God intends would not be misunderstood?

He rests much of his argument on the epistles of Christ to

* *Bishop* is a Saxon word, and thus explained by Dr Johnson, "One of the head order of the clergy."

the seven churches which were in Asia, Rev. ii. and iii.; because each of these is addressed to the angel of the church, whom he considers as the sole bishop. Admitting his explanation, which is the common one, that the angel was the president, and that he was the angel or messenger of the church because he presented their supplications before God, in allusion to the worship of the Jewish synagogues, this does not prove that each of the churches had only one president who always led their worship, and offered up their prayers to God. Two or more could not be thus employed at one time; and that may be a sufficient reason why the address to the president, under the designation of the angel, is in the singular number. I am doubtful, however, that this explanation rather leads to the idea of a perpetual president, having pre-eminence among his colleagues; and were we to admit of this distinction among the elders of a church, we should then have something not far removed from Mr E.'s principle—a bishop and his presbyters.

I shall, therefore, give another explanation which I am more inclined to adopt, without deciding positively which of them is right. Each of the seven churches, which consisted of many members, is represented by one candlestick. And is it not equally proper that the presbytery or eldership of each of them should be represented by a single star? Some of them might have two elders, and others perhaps three, four, or six. If a star had appeared for every individual, while the whole were apportioned among the different churches in such unequal numbers, there would have been a confusion in the figure, which is completely avoided by describing the presidents of each church as a collective body. All this appears reasonable and just; but a difficulty yet remains. After the explanation of the mystery, and when the elders are no longer denominated stars, but the angels of the churches, those of them who ministered in one church are still addressed in the singular number. I humbly conceive that a good reason can be given for this also. If there was a necessity, as has been stated, for representing the elders of one church by one figure, it was equally necessary to address them as one person, otherwise the epistles would not have corresponded with the emblematical representation given in the first chapter. If this style had been used, "Unto the angels of the church at Ephesus," &c., the figure must have consisted of not less than fourteen stars. But I have no doubt that it would have required a much greater number to have expressed the real fact, and that the elders of those churches were so unequally distributed, as not to admit of any other representation than that which appeared to the Apostle John—one star for the presidents of each congregation, of whatever

number they might really consist. Besides, it seems to have been the will of Him who signified this revelation to his servant John, to make very frequent use of the number seven.

A great many instances might be produced from the Scriptures, of numerous bodies being addressed as one person; some of which respect teachers. See Isa. xlii. 19, 20. Rom. ii. 19, 20.

Edinburgh, January 9, 1808.

XIII.—THE EDUCATION OF PASTORS.

Mr E. has allotted to a person whom he calls *the Bishop*, a degree of learning which, if he had been an Episcopalian, he would have considered as worthy of the bishop's dignified name, of his rank in society, and of the important charge which he alone must sustain. It is not easy, however, to believe that one who has paid so much attention to the Word of God, can be seriously convinced that literary acquirements, to so great an extent as that which he recommends, are absolutely necessary for qualifying men to feed the flock of God, and to preach the truth in purity and simplicity to perishing sinners. It is natural, therefore, to suppose that other objects are in view, such as fitting them for moving in the higher circles of life, and thus making the profession of Christ's name respectable in the eyes of carnal men—a vain attempt, in which professors of the Christian faith have persisted for more than seventeen hundred years. Some of the branches of education recommended by those who are fond of learned preachers, have a greater tendency "to minister questions" which alienate the mind from God, and lead to downright scepticism, than to produce "godly edifying, which is in faith."

On the other hand, it appears to me very absurd to speak in an unqualified manner against human learning, as many have done. Every man who can read and write, and deliver his sentiments with tolerable accuracy, and with that degree of arrangement which is essential to perspicuity, has acquired some of the most material branches of useful learning. No person, I suppose, will condemn any of these; and it must likewise be acknowledged that a man who does not possess them, cannot be an acceptable public teacher, save only in cases of urgent necessity, with which we are not acquainted in this country. A knowledge of foreign languages, of the history of mankind, of some useful sciences, and a pretty extensive acquaintance with the

construction and grammar of our native tongue, may be of great service to a Christian teacher, provided his knowledge have no tendency "to lift him up with pride, and to make him fall into the condemnation of the devil;" and there is much danger of this when the person is a novice in the profession of Christianity. But surely a Christian brother may be "apt to teach," although he be in a great measure destitute of many of the last-mentioned acquirements.

That which is demanded with the greatest appearance of reason, is an acquaintance with the languages in which the Word of God was originally written. Yet even this, in one view, is a dangerous accomplishment. Very few of those who profess to understand Greek and Hebrew, have so complete a knowledge of these languages as to prevent them from falling into many blunders, or to enable them to profit as much by their own criticisms, as they might by those of abler men, whose works are open to the perusal of the unlearned; and I never yet have been persuaded that a judicious Christian, who understands his English Bible, may not, almost in every case, detect a false criticism, and see the propriety of one that is just, and which agrees with the context, and with the scope and spirit of Divine revelation.

Nay, what is worse than any thing yet mentioned, I have seldom seen an instance of a learned man insisting upon the absolute necessity of literary acquirements to a great extent in preachers of the Gospel, who did not himself make a bad use of his learning; and I should not write sincerely, did I exculpate Mr E. from this charge. His talents are improved; but that does not hinder him from mistaking the meaning of plain texts of Scripture, "using unwarrantable freedom" with them, and exerting all his powers to explain them in a sense in which they were never intended, and of which a simple, discerning, and unlearned Christian, would be ashamed. His statement furnishes too many instances of this, some of which have been already noticed; and I am under the painful necessity of giving farther proof.

So far as I can judge, any useful branches of learning which may be thought necessary for preachers of the Gospel, ought to be obtained in conjunction with labouring industriously at some lawful calling. Idleness is no advantage to any man; and whatever speculative knowledge one may obtain by sequestrating himself from the world, he cannot in these circumstances gain much practical improvement.

That some Christian teachers, employed solely in the work of the ministry, are extremely useful, and adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour, I fully admit. But young men, prepa-

ring for this work, or just entered upon it, with perhaps a good deal of theory and little experience, labour under many disadvantages from the want of daily employment. Many of them, having neither inclination nor genius to devote themselves to profitable study, and having very often nothing else to employ them, are exposed to peculiar temptations. Besides, if an overseer ought not to be a novice, but a man considerably advanced in life, as is clearly intimated by an express regulation, by the designation elder, and by the work assigned to him; where is the Scripture warrant for a mere youth having such a charge? Would he not be better employed in labouring with his hands, and at the same time gradually improving his talents? If he act otherwise, upon what Christian principle does he claim exemption from the common duties of life, in which all his brethren are engaged?

On this point Mr E. has tried to make a Scripture text subservient to his views; and he has thus rendered it, "He gave some pastors and teachers, for (the sake of) fitting the saints for the work of the ministry," Eph. iv. 12. But although, without straining the text, he could have made it speak in this way, does it authorize fitting saints for the work of the ministry, by bringing them up from early youth in seminaries of learning, and thus forming a separate caste prepared to claim a superiority, not merely as teachers, but as speculative, scientific, and literary men, instructed, as they suppose, in all the mysteries of theology, while they have not yet learned to know themselves? Would not the first Christian teachers have reckoned a church a better seminary? Would not they have taught their babes and young men to know that "THE SCRIPTURES make the man of God perfect, thoroughly furnished to all good works?"

The text, however, says nothing about training for the work of the ministry. It informs us that gifts were bestowed by our exalted Lord "for the perfecting of the saints," or for bringing them into joint, and making them one complete organized body, as appears from the whole connexion of the passage. "Fitting the saints" may be a good enough translation. But it does not mean qualifying them to become ministers; it signifies fitting all the saints into their proper places in the body. And the next words express another distinct purpose, "for the work of the ministry." Provision was made for every branch of that work, by the gifts which Jesus sent down when he entered into his glory; and they were all necessary for the complete fulfilment of the work of the ministry, ordinary pastors and teachers, as well as Apostles, prophets, and evangelists.

A Christian teacher belongs to no religious caste distinct from that of his brethren. He is not a priest or a bishop, in the

general acceptation of these terms. He is not a clergyman, or an ecclesiastic of any order, but strictly and properly a layman, although he should have no secular profession or trade. He is, in fine, a Christian brother, distinguished from the rest of the brethren only by his possessing the peculiar qualifications which, according to the Word of God, are essential to the due fulfilment of his ministry; and by his excelling in those general characters which are common to all the disciples of Christ. His authority is paternal rather than magisterial. It is enforced and regulated by the Word of God alone, which clearly marks the distinction between "him that ruleth," and those who are placed under subjection; and, while the good of the church requires that he should uniformly maintain his just authority, it is equally his duty to condescend to the meanest of his brethren, and to give them an example of lowliness and humility.

Let any one read attentively the qualifications required by the Apostle Paul in his epistles to Timothy and Titus, and then say what connexion the greater part of Mr E.'s fitness has with these. He would persuade us indeed that human learning supplies, in some degree, the want of the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit, which have long ago ceased. But he does not so much as attempt to give any Scripture authority for this, which would have been altogether impossible.

I could have wished that he had more highly honoured the miraculous working of the Spirit of God, by confessing that it completely answered the Divine purpose, and that no human learning or industry can, in any respect, accomplish the same design. In the apostolic age, he, the self-same Spirit, divided to every man severally as he would, the word of wisdom, the word of knowledge, faith, the gifts of healing, the working of miracles, prophecy, divers kinds of tongues, the interpretation of tongues. 1 Cor. xii. 8—11. And still, by his ordinary operations, he qualifies whom he will for the work of the ministry, such as it now is; and it differs not from that in which the servants of Christ were engaged, who, in the primitive age, were not furnished with supernatural powers. I shall now draw the conclusion from Mr Ewing's theory.

The extraordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit are not stated in Scripture as qualifications for the pastoral office; nor are they mentioned in the charge to the elders of the church at Ephesus; nor in that which the Colossians were to deliver to Archippus; nor in any other description of elders, or of their duties, except in the single instance of healing the sick, James v. 14, 15. Neither are they ever stated as a reason why a church should esteem and obey those who have the rule over them.

Let it, moreover, be carefully noticed, that Mr E. has deprived overseers in churches of every scriptural designation, except two which are not generally understood—bishops and angels; for he considers even pastors and teachers as extraordinary office-bearers, peculiar to the first age of Christianity. And those who "had the rule over the churches, who laboured among them, and were over them in the Lord, and admonished them, as well as the elders" of all the primitive churches, he supposes to have been, not men in office, but experienced and gifted private brethren!

He has thus, unintentionally I believe, set aside and cancelled all the duties which bishops or overseers owe to their flocks, except such as by implication may be gathered from the qualifications which they ought to possess. And he has by the same means done what he could to deprive them of all the respect, and temporal support, and dutiful submission, which the churches owe to them. For the persons who are to be honoured, and supported, and obeyed, are the men who, according to Mr E.'s theory, sustain no official character; and he has not even expressly told us whether it be his opinion, that men having the same name and authority now exist in churches.

It appears, however, from several parts of his Statement, that, in the full extent of their character, they cannot be in any church; for he uniformly attributes supernatural qualifications to the primitive elders. How does this consist with their having been private brethren, and inferior to bishops, as he seems to intimate by the general scope of his arguments, and by frequently repeating that bishops, and even deacons, were chosen from that class, which he says is generally meant by the epithet elders? In his judgment, therefore, they were inferior to deacons. But, if they were extraordinarily qualified by the gifts of the Holy Spirit, must they not have been "prophets, evangelists, workers of miracles, or those who possessed the gifts of healing, or the gift of tongues, or of the interpretation of tongues;" consequently men who sustained important offices, and were, some of them at least, greatly superior to ordinary teachers? Were those persons the elders of the churches? Are not the latter constantly distinguished from Apostles, Prophets, and Evangelists, though some of them might be workers of miracles, and have the gift of tongues? Were prophets and evangelists the persons who had the stated oversight of the churches, and who were to be esteemed very highly in love for their work's sake, not as occasional visitants, but as those who were always over them in the Lord? This would be a transfer of the work of pastors, and of every duty towards them which the Word of God enjoins, to certain descriptions of men who have not existed for many ages!

In this way Mr E. arrives at the same point which, in the doctrine of his opponents, he so justly censures, that of superseding the office of elders, pastors, or overseers, in Christian churches!

Edinburgh, January 16, 1808.

XIV.—THE EXHORTATIONS OF THE BRETHREN.

Mr E. has done well in rejecting the claim of all or any of the brethren to be accounted prophets, an office which was not only peculiar to the primitive age, and distinguished by supernatural powers of an eminent kind, but next in order to that of Apostles. Eph. iv. 11. 1 Cor. xii. 28, 29. He has explained 1 Cor. xiv. in a manner so just, and so convincing, that it would be quite superfluous to attempt a further illustration of that passage. But I cannot refrain from expressing some surprise that his opponents should call private brethren to the public exercise of their gifts under the denomination of prophets, proposing, for their example, a class of extraordinary men who were divinely inspired, while they will scarcely allow pastors to imitate the elders of the church at Ephesus, or the unassuming bishops at Philippi!

He has likewise given a just view of the gifts to the exercise of which various office-bearers are called, Rom. xii. 3—9. It is the duty of the brethren to occupy their place in the body, and to use the talents which God hath given them with the same diligence and zeal which we see exemplified in those who taught and exhorted officially; and in this view I object not to the general application of such passages. The meanest disciple is called to follow the example of the Apostle Paul, and of the Lord himself. But surely those who have any gifts cannot receive benefit to themselves, nor can they profit others, by meeting with encouragement in the vain conceit that they are "prophets, ministers, teachers, and rulers." This is tempting them "to think more highly of themselves than they ought to think."

There is no reason, however, to doubt that private brethren exhorted one another in the primitive churches, and that those of them upon whom the Lord hath bestowed suitable gifts, are still bound by his authority to exercise them in that way. Mr E. yields this, so far as to admit that brethren may exhort in week-day meetings of the church. But he is extremely averse to it on the Lord's day; and there is scarcely any part of the

New Testament upon which the practice can be founded, which he has not controverted, and explained in another way. So much has he laboured on this point, that I am perfectly at a loss to see upon what ground he approves of the brethren exhorting at *any* church meeting. For if all the passages usually referred to as authorizing the practice, apply exclusively to private exhortation, from which Christian women are not precluded, or to the public exhortations of the bishop, as he supposes, how can he think that a brother is warranted to exhort at any meeting of the church? Again, if it be lawful on a week-day, is it not equally so on the Lord's day? Nay, is there not then a better opportunity for it, because there is more time, and because freedom from their worldly business enables the brethren more advantageously to apply their minds to any subject; and a more urgent call to it, because the churches ought to observe *all* the ordinances of which their circumstances admit on the Lord's day?

No person will blame me for supposing that it will be universally granted, that, if private brethren may exhort in public, they may also, at the request of their elders, be employed in offering up to God the prayers and thanksgivings of a church. Yet I would have every one to consider whether it be not a more weighty and serious employment to address the Most High as the mouth of a church, than to speak to our fellow-sinners about those very things concerning which "we, who are but dust and ashes, take it upon us to speak to the Lord." This hint is given, not for the purpose of discouraging brethren from praying, but in order to convince them of what one would think is self-evident, that if they can speak to God in public, they can in the same circumstances speak to men. Habit, or mistaken views of this subject, or both, may have actually rendered it, in some cases, easy to pray, and almost impossible to exhort, in a church. But this is not the judgment that would otherwise be formed by those who fear God.

I proceed then to justify public speaking in the churches by all who are possessed of useful gifts, requesting that I may be considered as extending the obligation no farther. A man who has gifts may be unconscious of it, or may excuse his negligence, or his timidity, by professing that he is not qualified in this way to edify his brethren. But no man is called to occupy talents which he does not really possess.

It would seem from Acts xiii. 15, that exhortation by those who sustained no official character, was a common thing in the Jewish synagogues after reading the law and the prophets; for "the rulers of the synagogue sent to Paul and Barnabas, saying, Men and brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for

the people, say on." And any one who is willing to take matters simply as they stand in the New Testament, may easily perceive that the same practice was instituted and followed in the churches of Christ. Their union in the truth, their desire of building up themselves and one another in their most holy faith, the necessity of men being thus trained to become teachers, and the impossibility of otherwise knowing who were capable to feed the flock of God—all these naturally led the first Christians to the practice of exhorting one another, and demonstrate to us the propriety and usefulness of attending to that duty.

These general arguments are conclusive. Practices which correspond with the spirit of the Gospel, and necessarily result from the love of the truth, and of the brethren for the truth's sake, must be conformable to the will of God. "Against such there is no law." And it will be found in general, that dislike of mutual exhortation in churches, arises from something else than unfeigned love of the brethren, or zeal for the truth, which is the centre and soul of their union.

But where shall we find clear and positive authority in the writings of the Apostles? Do they give any directions which can fairly be so explained? Or is the matter left wholly to the decision of the bishop, who generally does not choose "to be silenced" during any part of the time in which he used to be the sole speaker, especially on the Lord's day, when the audience is greatly increased in number?

The apostolic epistles, addressed not to pastors but to the churches, are full of precepts and earnest entreaties to exhort, to comfort, to teach, to admonish, and to edify one another. The greater part of those precepts are given in general terms. But, unless it could be proved that men as well as women are prohibited from speaking in churches, or that the public exercise of gifts which some may possess, is unsuitable to the nature of their connexion, and therefore cannot tend to edify, we ought to admit that the orderly, affectionate, and self-denied exercise of such gifts, is included in the general precepts to which I refer. I shall, however, only take particular notice of some of those passages, in which Christians are more expressly called to this duty in their associated state.

In 1 Cor. xii., where the body of Christ is described, every member is represented as occupying the place which God hath assigned him, and contributing to the good of the whole; and as there is use for the gifts of teachers, so is there likewise for the gifts of other members, whose duty it is, to the utmost of their power, to edify their brethren. Thus, in Eph. iv. 14—16, the Apostle, after having recapitulated the various gifts which had been given by our exalted Lord, mentions the purposes for

which he gave them; and among other things, "that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, who is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, maketh increase of the body, unto the edifying of itself in love."

Now the Apostle represents, not only pastors and teachers exercising their gifts, but the body speaking the truth in love, that they might accomplish the great design of their union, by preserving themselves from false doctrine, growing up into Christ, and making increase of the body, to the edifying of itself in love. That speaking the truth privately is here included, I most readily confess. But is it not suitable to the whole scope of the passage, to consider it as including the public exercise of all gifts which are adapted to public usefulness? It will be admitted that teachers are to edify the church by speaking the truth in public. Why not also the body, mentioned in the same connexion as being thus occupied, according to the various abilities of its members?

This duty is expressly commanded, in connexion with holding fast our profession, and provoking one another to love and to good works, Heb. x. 25. "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another; and so much the more as ye see the day approaching." They were not to forsake the public assemblies or church meetings, especially on the Lord's day, as some had done. And what was to be their employment when assembled? The answer is, "exhorting one another," under a deep impression of the danger which awaited them; for "the great and the terrible day of the Lord," when Jerusalem was to be destroyed, "was approaching." They saw it drawing nigh. Both their assembling themselves, therefore, and their exhorting one another, are here recommended as antidotes against apostasy, and as God's appointed means for strengthening their faith, and leading them to the sure ground of everlasting consolation, amidst all the calamities which could befal them. The words *one another*, indeed, are supplied by our translators. But suppose we stop with the word *exhorting*, who else could be the objects of their exhortations?

Even this express authority Mr E. has attempted to set aside, alleging that the Apostle only requires brethren to exhort one another in private to attend church meetings; and for this he produces Newcombe's translation, "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but

exhorting to it." If no church had ever allowed private brethren to supersede the labours of the bishop for half an hour at any of their public meetings, would we ever have heard of such a translation? The commandment to exhort is a general one, and no person would think of restricting it to one subject, unless he had a favourite point to gain, and that seems to be the honour of the officiating clergyman.

Again, he puts another meaning upon the word *exhorting* in this passage, not very consistent with the former, making it "a general term for all the exercises of social worship taken together;" and then he excludes the exhortations of the brethren, without giving any reason for it, and leaves all in the hands of the bishop. But if it even were intended to express all Divine ordinances, which is evidently a forced interpretation, why should we not include that which is the primary and obvious meaning of the word, *exhorting?* And how can an apostolic injunction upon churches to exhort, be understood as giving to the pastor the exclusive power of performing that duty?

It appears to me that the Apostle Peter regulates, if he does not enjoin, the duty of mutual and public exhortation, when he says, "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God," 1 Pet. iv. 11. Mr E., I think, somewhere confines this entirely to the bishop. But the expression, "if any man speak," is too general to be so explained. Besides, the context shows that private brethren are intended. "Use hospitality one to another, without grudging. As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God." The persons here addressed are surely not bishops alone; nor will they themselves affirm this. All who possessed the gift of worldly substance, were to use hospitality one to another. Then he proceeds to the exercise of other gifts. "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God," or precisely the same doctrine which God himself hath spoken. "If any man minister," or supply the wants of the poor, "let him do it as of the ability which God giveth, that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ."

Undoubtedly overseers speak, and deacons minister. But the expressions here are of a more extensive meaning, and more clearly applicable to the brethren at large, than to admit of their being restricted to office-bearers. Every deacon ministers, not according to the personal ability which God giveth him, but according to the ability and willingness of the church. And if every man be called to minister "as God hath prospered him," so in like manner every man who possesses any gift for public speaking, is obliged to use it for the edification of his brethren, agreeably to the direction given

by the Apostle. How can it be otherwise? Does the Lord approve of "hiding talents in the earth?"

From a general view of matters as delineated in the New Testament, it appears that "continuing steadfastly in the doctrine of the Apostles," especially on the Lord's day, when all Divine ordinances which we have in our power ought to be observed, includes in it reading the Holy Scriptures, the ministrations of pastors and teachers, where such have been ordained, and the exhortations of the brethren, subject to the judicious and temperate control of those who have the rule over them.

Mr E. brings forward a great many prudential reasons for declining mutual exhortation on the first day of the week. But these, notwithstanding the ingenuity and acuteness displayed in them, require no answer; because, although Divine ordinances may be abused, yet they are all salutary and useful in the highest degree, when observed in the true spirit of Christianity, which destroys every selfish principle, and excludes all that is inconsistent with love to God, and to the brethren. And were some public teachers more under the influence of this spirit, they would not think themselves affronted or displaced when the truth is spoken in love by the body of which they are members, if it be a body capable of such an exercise; and if it be totally incapable of this, whatever may be its just description, it is not the body of Christ, although some of its members may belong to the general assembly and church of the first-born.

Mr E. would do well to consider that his plan in favour of one man performing the whole of the public duty on the Lord's day, in every church, has led him not only to do injustice to particular texts of Scripture, but to oppose the whole scope and spirit of the New Testament regarding Christian fellowship; for the sacred writers uniformly declare that the body of Christ consists of many members—that not one, but a variety of these, are the governing members—and that the church in general contribute their share towards the welfare and prosperity of the body. Indeed, no other system accords with the nature of their connexion as redeemed sinners, "glorying in nothing save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which they are crucified to the world; and loving one another as Christ hath loved them."

To affirm that the want of the personal presence of Apostles, Prophets, and Evangelists, is better supplied by a single person learned in all the wisdom of the Universities, and in many cases loving to have the pre-eminence, than by such variety of gifts as the Lord is now pleased to bestow, seems equally in-

consistent with humility, and with every rational view of that which tends to edification. In the great charter and infallible standard of the churches, we never read of the bishop, or the office-bearer of any description, except when the Apostle states the qualifications which every bishop ought to possess. * Of this Mr E. has taken an undue advantage; for he might as well have argued that the Apostle describes one universal bishop, as that he restricts the number to one in any congregation, after he had commanded elders to be ordained in every city. Neither is the angel of each of the seven Asiatic churches an example of this, as I have already proved.

That which ought still more to convince my friend Mr E., (for I sincerely wish to convince, and not to irritate,) is the weighty consideration that, while no president of a church is, in any part of the sacred Scriptures, termed the pastor or the bishop, these are designations appropriated to our gracious and Almighty Lord—the SHEPHERD AND BISHOP OF OUR SOULS. This distinction may be illustrated by a similar instance. A believer is *a* son of God. But *the* Son of God is a name which belongs exclusively to him of whom God the Father testified, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." On one of those occasions, John the Baptist "saw and bare record that this is *the* SON OF GOD;" and he is thus eminently distinguished from every other son of God, whether among elect angels or redeemed men. A distinction between him and all the other sons of men, is likewise decidedly marked by his being called the SON OF MAN.

I should be happy to see Mr Ewing renounce the erroneous parts of his system, as publicly as he has attempted to defend them. He will show an amiable and a Christian spirit, by taking in good part the free and unadorned suggestions of a layman, and by yielding subjection to the authority of God in his Word, how deficient soever, in the more elevated branches of human learning, the person may be who endeavours to recommend "what the Spirit saith unto the churches."

EDINBURGH, JANUARY 23, 1808.

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* My use of the term is always to be understood as expressing Mr E.'s idea, and not my own. At the same time, the designation may be innocently applied when it is not limited to one individual, as when we say the Christian or the believer, meaning any Christian or any believer. In this view the Apostle Paul describes the character of the bishop. He does not intend the overseer of each church, but any overseer. And when he says, 2 Tim. iii. 17, "that the man of God may be perfect," he does not confine this to Timothy alone, nor to one eminent person in a church, but comprehends in the expression every man of God.

REMARKS ON DR CHALMERS' ADDRESS

TO THE

INHABITANTS OF KILMANY,

AND ON HIS GENERAL SENTIMENTS RELATIVE TO THE DOCTRINE OF DIVINE GRACE.

IN SIX LETTERS TO A FRIEND.

FIRST PUBLISHED IN MDCCCXVI.

PREFACE.

A CONSIDERABLE part of the following *Letters* is employed in the discussion of various subjects in which I am agreed with Dr Chalmers—particularly, that every hearer of the Gospel is immediately called to believe it, and to bring forth suitable fruits —and that it sanctifies all who really do believe it. The point of difference between us is distinctly marked, and is considered chiefly in the first Three Letters. The Fourth Letter, also, treats generally of similar subjects. But, throughout the whole publication, silence is preserved in relation to all matters of difference which are not immediately connected with the point in hand. The Fifth and Sixth Letters contain, almost exclusively, the one a doctrinal, the other a practical view of the sanctifying influence of the Gospel.

While I freely express my disapprobation of the way in which the Author of the *Address* would have sinners prepared for the reception of the Gospel, I utterly disavow every thing personal, except sincere affection and esteem. Among those who value as they ought the great endowments which are possessed by a few individuals only, and yet know the due place assigned to fallible man, there is perhaps no person more disposed than myself to admit all that can be said with justice in favour of Dr Chalmers. My admiration of his intellectual powers, and of his energetic and impressive manner, has not been diminished by hearing another of his sermons since the date of my Sixth Letter. By all possible means, I have sought to avoid any misapprehension of his real sentiments; and the sole object of

my censure is that which I deliberately consider as erroneous doctrine, by whomsoever it may be held and propagated.

Except in the single instance of Dr Chalmers, I have named, with disapprobation of their doctrine, no individual preachers of the Gospel, nor any class of Christian teachers. And his name also might have been omitted, had I not been conscious that his *Address* was the occasion of my writing at all, and that silence in this particular, while readers must have seen what person was in view, would have been unnatural and affected. It was equally impossible to have concealed my own name. From unavoidable circumstances, the writer of the *Letters* must have been known to a pretty numerous circle, and the truth would have come out by means of private whispers. But if it had been otherwise, I should have scrupled to embrace an opportunity of wounding a much respected author in the dark.

Notwithstanding my anxiety to avoid every unscriptural idea, and every expression which could give just ground of offence to any lover of the truth, I have no doubt that a critical reader might still convict me of many inaccuracies, and some mistakes; and I entertain only a feeble hope that these in general will be such as friendship and candour may innocently forgive. I am aware also, that it has not been in my power to do justice to so great a number of very important subjects, within the narrow limits of an ordinary pamphlet. The candid reader will therefore permit me to solicit his indulgence. My chief concern has been to give just and simple views of the doctrine of the Gospel, and of its practical influence; showing, with all my inadequate powers, that it is the nature and design of this heavenly doctrine to teach the most ignorant, to convince the most incredulous, and to save from sin and from wrath the most guilty and wretched among men.

Edinburgh, August 15, 1816.

REMARKS, &c.

LETTER I.

After an attentive perusal of Dr Chalmers' Address to his former parishioners, it occurred to me that an answer, written in the spirit of meekness, and, as far as is consistent with human imperfection, imitating the perspecuity, the simplicity, and precision of those inspired messengers who, in the first promulgation of the Gospel, "used great plainness of speech," might serve the cause of truth. To me it would have been highly gratifying, "if a scribe better instructed unto the kingdom of heaven" had come forward on this occasion, "in the fulness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ." * But as all have hitherto declined the task, and the case appears singularly urgent, I shall attempt to clear away some rubbish, that the precious parts of the doctrine contained in the *Address* may appear with more unsullied lustre.

In this work, however, I engage with hesitation; not on account of the acknowledged eminent talents of Dr Chalmers, nor his extensive popularity, nor the many censures which I have reason to expect from his numerous friends. These and other considerations appear as nothing, when I reflect upon the awful importance of the subjects which are to come under discussion—subjects intimately connected with the eternal salvation of the souls of men. When we see that the Gospel proclaims to sinners of all nations, and of all characters, the only sure ground of hope for eternity, we recognise God's own method of salvation, of which it is impossible that we should

* At the above date, I was ignorant that my wish had been in part fulfilled by several Reviewers. I have now seen three friendly and successful attempts to correct the *Address*, in periodical works published in Edinburgh. But it appears to me that a more full discussion, of which their limits do not admit, is still very necessary.

know any thing more than that which he hath been pleased to reveal, and concerning which we must err, if all our ideas, and principles, and experience in relation to it, have not an immediate reference to his own infallible Word, and be not entirely regulated thereby. Under a solemn impression of this, "I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give me the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him." I am conscious of much ignorance, and of many deficiencies. But the sovereign Lord of heaven and earth often employs unlikely means, and he is all-sufficient to give direction and support to the most feeble instrument.

Allow me further to premise, that I have no disposition to find fault with the author of the Address, with whom I have not the pleasure of being personally acquainted. I highly respect him on account of his splendid and useful talents, and still more because of his knowledge in some leading branches of Divine truth, and his boldness, and zeal, and faithfulness, in preaching the Word of life, so far as he perceives its import. I have the fullest conviction that he acts from principle, and that he is sincerely devoted to the work in which he is engaged. It is not my design, therefore, to take any advantage from the rapid and hasty manner in which the Address has confessedly been composed, nor to impute to its author any sentiment which he has not avowed. But I claim the privilege of honestly stating what I conceive to be erroneous in his doctrine, and of exposing without reserve its hurtful tendency, which certainly he does not perceive.

Feeling, as I do, a very strong inclination to convince him that his most favourite topic, at least that which is most prominent in his Address, does not accord with the doctrine of the Scriptures; and being equally desirous of leading his hearers and others to examine for themselves, I wish to avoid every thing which tends to irritate. With this view, I shall quote sparingly from his work; because, when the opposite method is pursued, he who censures is frequently tempted to analyze too much; to make criticisms which, though they may be just, are not essentially necessary; to mistake the exact meaning of his opponent; to lay himself under the imputation of quoting passages out of their connexion; and, in fine, to assume the appearance rather of a caviller than of an advocate for truth. It is easier and safer, as well as more useful, to take up the scope and spirit of an author, than to follow him through every paragraph, and to hunt after trifling inaccuracies. If in the course which I mean to pursue, I should still unknowingly misrepresent any sentiment published by Dr Chalmers, I am open to conviction, and shall frankly acknowledge my

error, it being understood, as already hinted, that I am at liberty to show from the Scriptures the unavoidable consequences which result from certain doctrines.

Agreeably to the above resolution, I shall give, in my own words, a summary of the leading particulars contained in the Address, distinguishing how far I am agreed with the author.

1. He expressly avows and maintains the total corruption of all men, without exception, who are not converted by the power of God. 2. He strenuously holds the doctrine of free justification through the finished work of the Son of God, without the deeds of the law. 3. He maintains clearly, that every one to whom the Word of salvation is sent, is immediately called by the authority of God to believe the Gospel, and thus to obtain all its inestimable blessings, without money and without price. 4. He contends that every one who hears the Gospel is not only commanded to believe it, but is also immediately called, at the same instant, to purify his heart, and to reform his conduct. 5. He considers the practical influence of the truth on the hearts and lives of believers, as the means of strengthening and establishing their faith. 6. When persons do not believe, he insists that still they must use their utmost efforts to reform their hearts and lives, as a preparation for believing the Gospel. Such, he often repeats, are in a likelier and more hopeful way than others.

Now to all this I give my unqualified and most cordial assent, the last article alone excepted. I object merely against calling upon any man to prepare himself for the faith of the Gospel by performing good works, or to make any exertion by which he may render himself more likely than others to attain the righteousness which is by faith. Far from admitting that good works pave the way for ultimately finding rest to the guilty conscience in the Lord Jesus Christ, I am fully persuaded that they who, under any pretence whatever, "seek to attain (justifying) righteousness, as it were by the works of the law," are in a less hopeful state than others, as I shall afterwards have occasion to show.

While I profess my agreement with Dr Chalmers in so many of his articles of faith, with only one exception, permit me to give a caution against supposing that I approve, in all respects, of the use which he has made of some of them, particularly the fourth and fifth articles, and more especially the fourth. The error which he propagates, is founded on mistaken views of the order in which men are called to believe God, and to do his will. And in forming a general estimate of the subject, it appears to me that teaching sinners to prepare themselves by

the deeds of the law for obtaining justification by faith, is, in its own nature, totally inconsistent with the sacred truths which he has acknowledged. My admission proceeds on a full conviction that the tenets held by both parties, as mentioned above, are clearly revealed in the Word of God, and are in the highest degree important. I do not hesitate therefore to affirm, that every doctrine which is at irreconcilable variance with them, or which necessarily tends to subvert them, *must be false.*

Dr Chalmers does right when he urges upon the consciences of his hearers, or of those who read his writings, the extensive and unalterable demands of the perfect law of God; for "the righteousness of his testimonies is everlasting, and his law is the truth." It consists with the natural notices of God in our consciences, and with every just principle of reason, that we are accountable to our great Creator, and preserver, and bountiful benefactor, for the use which we make of the talents which he bestows, and for every transgression of his law, which is "holy, and just, and good." The law was opened up, and illustrated, and applied, by the great Preacher of righteousness, in all its spirituality and extent, as it affects, not merely the outward actions, but the hearts of men, and their most secret thoughts and motives. Jesus frequently taught, that the first and great commandment is perfect love to God, and the second, perfect love to our neighbour, adding, upon one occasion, "On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets," * because love is the animating principle of all obedience. One Apostle calls it "the royal law according to the Scriptures." † Another affirms that the whole second table of the law "is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law." ‡ And again, "All the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." ‖

It is impossible in the nature of things that God's eternal rule of righteousness can cease to demand perfect, sinless, and uninterrupted obedience from every rational being. To say that the moral inability of man dissolves, or in the smallest degree weakens, his obligation to keep the moral law, is to add insult to his rebellion against the Most High. What is his moral inability? It is solely the disinclination of his carnal mind, which not only harbours and indulges enmity, but is enmity itself against God and his law.

The same authority is interposed with respect to the glorious

* Matt. xxii. 37—40.
† James ii. 8.
‡ Rom. xiii. 9, 10.
‖ Gal. v. 14.

Gospel of the blessed God. When Jehovah speaks, "whether it be for correction or for mercy," it is the indispensable duty of man to hear. With infinite condescension and pity he addresses the fallen race of Adam, loaded with guilt, beset with an accumulation of present misery, and justly exposed to eternal damnation. He represents their state as not merely wretched in the extreme, but completely and absolutely irremediable by their own exertions, to what extent soever these may be carried; "they are prisoners in a pit wherein is no water." *

To these lost sinners, these vile, self-ruined, and helpless slaves of Satan, and of their own lusts, it hath pleased God to reveal the exceeding riches of his grace, by providing for them an almighty Saviour, and "sending him to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them who are bound;" † to fulfil the law which they have broken; "to pour out his soul unto death; to bear the sin of many, and to make intercession for the transgressors." ‡ The arduous work of the great Redeemer, thus finished in his death, is "the righteousness of God," the only and all-sufficient ground of the justification of sinners; and God the Father hath fully manifested his approbation of this Divine righteousness, by raising from the dead him who fulfilled it, and "glorifying his Son Jesus;" thus also "declaring him to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness." ‖ This is the testimony of the Gospel, and it contains also a promise of eternal life to all who believe it; "for God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." § "And to him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins." ¶

Human works, then, have no concern in any respect with justification before God, except as they clearly show that the grace by which we are justified is altogether sovereign and free. God hath determined, and he will accomplish it, "that no flesh shall glory in his presence;" and "boasting is excluded, not by the law of works, but by the law of faith."

Still, however, men are called "to believe the Gospel, to repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance;" and whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, they are addressed in the following terms, "Hearken diligently unto me; hear, and your souls shall live." ** "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." †† "Cast away from

* Zech. ix. 11.
† Isaiah lxi. 1.
‡ Isaiah liii.
‖ Rom. i. 4.
§ John iii. 16.
¶ Acts x. 43.
** Isaiah lv. 2, 3.
†† Acts xvi. 31.

you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart, and a new spirit; for why will ye die, O house of Israel? * "Repent, and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins;—Save yourselves from this untoward generation." † "Repent, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." ‡

Passages of like import might be quoted without number. But these are enough to show that the Lord requires of all the hearers of the Gospel implicit faith in his testimony concerning Jesus, and sincere repentance with all its fruits—immediate and universal subjection to his commandments, proceeding not merely from the fear of wrath, but from love and gratitude—the humble and affectionate homage of a reconciled, a renewed, and sanctified heart.

The Word of God proposes no half measures, nor time-serving expedients. It goes at once to the root of the evil; for "it is quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." ‖ "It is as a fire, and like a hammer which breaketh the rock in pieces." § This is the mighty work which God intends to perform by all his gracious calls, and also by his alarming denunciations; for the Apostle Paul, "knowing the terror of the Lord, persuaded men;" while he also described his ministry as consisting chiefly in an overpowering display of the love of God. "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." ¶ The Word of God, or the Gospel, by the power of the Spirit of grace, first cures the infidelity of the human heart, and then its love of sin. The former is the cause, the latter its immediate effect.

Now, this complete revolution, this new creation, which is truly the work of God, is expressed or implied in every Gospel call to dead sinners; and what similarity is there between this radical change of the heart of man, and that partial and outward reformation which leaves the person as really an enemy to God as "blameless" Saul was before his conversion?

To prevent any misunderstanding of my sentiments regarding a Divine call to every hearer of the Gospel to believe it as the only ground of his hope, and at the same moment of time to lay down his weapons of rebellion, to love God and keep his commandments;—and that I may, if possible, remove

* Ezek. xviii. 31. † Acts ii. 38, 40. ‡ Acts iii. 19.
‖ Heb. iv. 12. § Jer. xxiii. 29. ¶ 2 Cor. v. 11, 20.

a stumbling-block out of the way of some lovers of the truth, who admit the former part, but entertain doubts respecting the latter part of this call; I shall endeavour to simplify my views of both, by attempting a brief illustration of a well known passage of Scripture.

The worst of human characters are thus addressed, "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." Isa. lv. 6, 7.

By the way of the wicked, I understand every thing in his conduct opposite to the pure and holy law of God; and by the thoughts of the unrighteous, his enmity against God, the rebellious principle within, which alienates him from God, which disposes him to reject the Gospel of salvation, and to practise all iniquity in his life and conduct. His return to the Lord is the effect of his believing that there is forgiveness with him, as he himself most graciously declares. The abundant pardoning mercy of our God, though last mentioned, as also in the promises of the new covenant, is yet the groundwork of all. The faith of this breaks down the hard and stony heart; it encourages the guilty rebel to seek God, and to call upon his name; it produces true repentance, and constrains him to forsake his wicked way, and his unrighteous thoughts. But surely there is, in the words referred to, an immediate call to seek the Lord, to pray for mercy, and to bring forth the genuine fruits of that repentance which flows from a discovery of the love of God. There is no interval between the call to believe the Gospel, and to forsake the ways of sin.

The error, therefore, consists not in pleading for such a call; it lies merely in calling sinners to work, that they may be prepared to believe; which is reversing the doctrine of the Gospel, and turning it upside down, if such an expression be not too familiar when applied to a subject so unspeakably great and important.

There must be some clear and decided point where the sanctification of the people of God begins, some just and efficacious principle which will ascertain its progress and completion. And what should this be? Nothing else, surely, than the Word of salvation, which was preached by the Lord Jesus Christ and his Apostles, "received not as the word of men, but as it is in truth the Word of God." This Word is said to "work effectually in them that believe," * while it certainly has no beneficial

* 1 Thess. ii. 13.

influence upon others; on the contrary, it aggravates their guilt and misery; for "this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." Jesus prayed, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." * "God purified the hearts of the Gentiles by faith." † "The word of the truth of the Gospel," which the Colossians believed, "brought forth fruit in them, as it did in all the world, from the day they heard it, and knew the grace of God in truth;" ‡ though until that day they had been "alienated, and enemies in their minds by wicked works." § The scattered strangers addressed by the Apostle Peter, had "purified their souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit to unfeigned love of the brethren." ‖ And, indeed, throughout the whole of the Scriptures, all true holiness in the hearts and lives of men is uniformly ascribed to the same cause.

It is plain, therefore, that no man can put himself into a favourable situation for becoming a believer of the Gospel by performing good works; for he absolutely can do nothing of which God approves, till he "receive the love of the truth that he may be saved;" and surely works which proceed from the dark abyss of spiritual death, and "the wages of which is death," cannot justly be supposed to prepare any one for beholding and enjoying "the light of life." But beside this, works of every description are an abomination in the sight of God, when a person has any dependence on them as entitling him to favour, or preparing him for obtaining it. He thus depreciates the work of Christ; he replies against Divine sovereignty; and, on the ground of a false religious principle, he builds, in his rebellious heart, an additional fortress against the doctrine of free justification by the grace of God through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus—a stronghold which, more than any other, resists the mighty weapons of victorious grace.

A more particular inquiry into the main point of difference shall be reserved for another letter.

Edinburgh, February 15, 1816.

* John xvii. 17. † Acts xv. 9. ‡ Col. i. 5, 6. § Verse 21. ‖ 1 Pet. i. 22.

LETTER II.

Before proceeding to a more particular consideration of the main article respecting which I differ from Dr Chalmers, it may be proper to inquire what description of persons he in general addresses. You will tell me that this appears at once from his titlepage—"the inhabitants of the parish of Kilmany." Something more, however, is necessary to convince me that he really does hold the error with which I have most reluctantly charged him.

In reading his work, one cannot always know with certainty whether he considers himself as addressing weak believers, or unbelievers. There is a confusion in this respect throughout the Address, which indeed cannot be avoided in any address, whether oral or written, which is delivered indiscriminately to a mixed congregation, or to the inhabitants of a district, under the appellation of "brethren," not merely as "being made of one blood," but denoting a religious connexion and fellowship, totally unknown to the writers of the New Testament. Christians, properly so called, have peculiar duties and privileges, and are capable of being roused and animated by motives which have no influence whatever on the world at large. On this and many other accounts, to speak or write on the same terms to both classes as one society of brethren, when the subjects treated of are not clearly applicable to both, is palpably wrong. This confounds the greatest of all distinctions which subsist among men, and throws a veil over Christianity itself, which, in this respect, wore a different aspect in the apostolic age. There was then a Christian community scattered among the nations, but united in churches or congregations, and visibly distinguished from all around them, as well by the influence of the Gospel on their temper and conduct, as by their pure, simple, and spiritual worship in a state of separation from the world. And this arose not from their own fancy, or love of singularity, but from the express authority of their Lord and Master, whom we also profess to serve.

Believers seem to be addressed in pages 43—45; for in proof of his assertion, "that obedience is the prescribed path to clearer manifestations," Dr Chalmers quotes John xiv. 21, Acts v. 32, both of which passages are exclusively applicable to the people of God. But then, he had more particularly quoted the same passages, page 29, apparently with an intention of applying them to all the hearers of the Gospel, for there he produces them as a sample of those texts which he had frequently

urged upon all his parishioners, at least on those of them who experienced any alarm of conscience, or were at all concerned about religion. He knows well that there is an immense difference between a believer, though his faith be as a grain of mustard-seed, and one who is not converted to the faith of Christ. If all his affirmations respecting farther knowledge of Divine truth, establishment in the faith of it, and more abundant experience of the love of Christ, and of the joyful hope of eternal life, had been confined to those who have already learned that truth which flesh and blood cannot reveal, I should have approved of his instructions and admonitions. There are many trying and useful lessons on this subject in our Lord's discourses with the Apostles, and in their epistles to the churches.

So long as good works are kept in that place which God himself hath assigned to them, we cannot be too careful " to maintain them, by showing out of a good conversation our own works, with meekness of wisdom ;" by marking the effects which must flow either from having or lacking those Christian virtues, enumerated 2 Pet. i., and Gal. v.; and by averring in the strongest terms that a profession of Christianity, without a conversation becoming the Gospel, is vain and hypocritical ; that the more apparently serious such profession is, so much the worse ; and that although speculative and high-soaring professors, who say they have faith and have not works, may value themselves on account of their fancied attainments, yet it will most certainly be found a truth at last, that " without holiness no man shall see the Lord."

But the persons to whom Dr Chalmers seems chiefly to address himself, and whom he often represents as in a state of preparation for the Gospel, likelier, more disposed, in a state of greater readiness, and nearer the kingdom of God than others, are not those whom he reckons visible believers. * His object is first to awaken in their minds some concern about religion ; and then, if this do not appear to issue in repentance unto life, to direct them how to make progress, not in the Christian life, which they have not yet begun to live, but in a course of obedience founded on natural principles, and on some awful impressions regarding their eternal state, which he expects will issue in true conversion, though this may be delayed for a pe-

* See pages 17—22, and 31—36, Second Edition, to which reference is always made. It is not to be supposed that the author could have written in such terms with respect to believers. They are never described in the Holy Scriptures as nearer the kingdom of God than profane sinners, for they are the very subjects of that kingdom ; nor as likelier and more disposed than other men to believe the Gospel, for they are already " the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus."

riod of years. He admits the impossibility of their rendering acceptable service to God, till he create in them a clean heart, and that without Christ they can do nothing. But still they must "be up and doing," and he vehemently urges upon them that they should "most diligently do all that is within their reach," by forsaking their everyday sins, such as stealing, lying, evil speaking, idle and slothful service, &c. All these, he says, they would have strength to give up for a week, on the assurance of a great temporal reward, or from the dread of severe temporal punishment.

"Now," he adds, "for the temporal punishment, I substitute the call of 'flee from the coming wrath.' Let this call have the effect it should have, and the effect it actually does have, on many who are not warped by a misleading speculation, and it will make them stir up such strength as they possess, and give up, in deed and in performance, much of their actual misconduct." Pages 17, 18. Again, when reminding them of the call of John the Baptist, to bring forth fruits meet for repentance; or, as he expresses it, "to turn from the evil of their manifest iniquities;" which he cannot suppose, and I do not think, is all that is intended by fruits meet for repentance, he says, "Surely, if God thought it wise to ply sinners with a call to turn from the evil of their ways, before he fully revealed to them the evangelical ground of their acceptance, we may count it scriptural and safe to ply them with this call at the same time that we state to them the evangelical ground of their acceptance. It is true that the statement may not be comprehended all at once. It may be years before it is listened to by the careless, before it is rested in by the desponding, before the comfort of it is at all felt or appropriated by the doubting and melancholy inquirer. Now, what I contend for is, that during this interval of time, these people may and ought to be urged with the call of departing from their iniquities." Page 22.

It appears, I think, from the description of character in the two preceding paragraphs, fairly taken from the Address, that the persons whom Dr Chalmers strongly urges to diligence in seriously and uprightly doing all the good they can, as a preparation for understanding the Gospel and bringeth forth its real fruits, are unbelievers. We have seen, also, that he considers those of them who are thus employed, as in a more promising and hopeful state than others; and it shall now be my humble endeavour to give some further proof of the opposite doctrine from the oracles of unerring truth.

That which he seems to depend upon as the chief support of his argument, is the doctrine of John the Baptist, whom he

represents as having prepared his disciples for the after-reception of the Gospel, when more fully declared, by an immediate call "to bring forth fruits meet for repentance," and by teaching them what they ought immediately to do in their various callings and circumstances.

Now, I most readily confess that if either precept or example can be found in the Scriptures for establishing any doctrine, it must be true; and there is something peculiarly engaging and satisfactory in the proof which arises from example. What would have been our situation if the way of salvation through Christ had been merely taught doctrinally, and if no instances had been left on record of wretched sinners, and the chief of sinners, having found mercy?

It appears to me, however, that there is no example in the New Testament of any one conversion having taken place in consequence of years of preparation, either by the person's own endeavours merely, or by the co-operation of Divine aid. The evangelists and the writer of the Acts of the Apostles give a historical account of the conversion of many thousands; and to this there are frequent references in the epistles addressed to the churches, reminding them of their first hearing of the Gospel, and of the effects which it had produced by the power of God. But neither in the Gospels, the Acts, nor the Epistles, is there a single hint about weeks or months, not to say years, of preparation before they turned to God.

On the day of Pentecost about three thousand were converted, and added on the same day to the disciples then assembled at Jerusalem; and although I am far from thinking that none are brought to the knowledge of the truth in a more gradual way, yet nothing certainly can be more unlike the simple narrative of conversions in the New Testament, than the supposition of persons labouring under convictions, striving to reform their lives, doing every thing within their reach, and then receiving the knowledge of the truth at the distance of six or seven years, as must have been the case with John's first disciples, if they were engaged in such exercises from the time when he went out to the wilderness of Judea, and did not, till the day of Pentecost, believe the Gospel which he preached. Besides, it may reasonably be supposed that many of John's disciples would become members of the churches of Christ in Judea; and some we know were afterwards in more distant places, such as Apollos at Corinth, Acts xviii., and twelve disciples at Ephesus, Acts xix. These were all acknowledged as believers, while "they knew only the baptism of John, and needed to have the way of God expounded to them more

perfectly." This total want of example is a decisive evidence that the principle which I combat has no foundation in the Word of God.

Dr Chalmers himself has not attempted to bring from the Scriptures any other example of his doctrine than that of the disciples of John, who, though he was a greater prophet than any who preceded him, was yet "less than the least in the kingdom of heaven." Surely, then, we ought to take our ideas of true conversion rather from what occurred on and after the day of Pentecost, than from the doctrine of John, and the attainments of his disciples. Yet, while he thus unduly venerates one who no doubt was employed as the means of ushering in the first dawn of the Gospel day, he gives but a very partial view of the doctrine of this "messenger of the Lord of Hosts," who prepared his way, not merely, as might be supposed from reading the Address, by enjoining reformation, but by a faithful execution, in all respects, of the mission on which he was sent. And it may be useful to endeavour in some measure to supply this deficiency, especially as inattention to this subject appears to have been the chief cause of the mistake which I earnestly wish to rectify.

The office and work of John are thus described, Isa. xl. 3—5. "The voice of him who crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of Jehovah, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: and the glory of Jehovah shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together; for the mouth of Jehovah hath spoken it."

This magnificent and sublime description seems to be given in allusion to preparations made for the entry into his capital of a great king and a mighty conqueror, by making all the ways through which he had to pass smooth and straight, though they should intersect a wilderness and a desert; exalting the valleys, levelling the mountains and hills, and removing every obstruction, that nothing may impede the progress of this honourable personage and supreme ruler, and that the vast surrounding multitude may have an equal opportunity of viewing him seated on a high triumphal car, and of admiring the splendour of his retinue, and the brilliance of his equipage; no one standing on vantage-ground, or being permitted to overtop his fellows.

Something analogous to this surely must be visible in the mission, character, and doctrine of the forerunner of the great Messiah; and, if we substitute spiritual for earthly glory, we

may easily see, by reading his history in the Evangelists, how he in like manner prepared the way of Jehovah. The following particulars are mentioned, almost the whole of them, in Matt. iii., Luke i. and iii., John i. and iii.

1. By the austerity of his manners, his rough clothing, his coarse and homely fare, he gave evidence that the Old Testament dispensation was not yet finished, while his going out to the wilderness of Judea was congenial to his recluse habits, and was a literal fulfilment of Isaiah's prophecy. His doctrine, however, showed that a new state of things was immediately to commence. He was a singular and an eminent person, placed, as it were, between the old and the new dispensation, but partaking more of the light which was now to break forth in meridian splendour, than of the darkness which had formerly prevailed.

2. His message was, "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Change your minds with respect to the character of the Messiah of Israel, the design of his coming, and the nature of his kingdom. "Believe on him who shall come after me, that is, on Christ Jesus." * Repent of your sins, and forsake them; for the glorious, heavenly, and eternal kingdom spoken of by the prophets is now at hand.

3. He warned them thus, Beware of thinking that you are in a safe state because "you have Abraham to your father," and enjoy the outward privileges of the peculiar people of God; "for I say unto you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham" of those wretched outcasts, those Gentiles dead in sins, who, in a spiritual sense, are unfeeling and lifeless as "these stones." † "Bring forth, therefore, fruits meet for repentance," this being the only proper evidence that you are the true children of Abraham, and justified by faith as he was.

* Acts xix. 4, 5. A summary of John's doctrine is there given by the Apostle Paul in the following words, "John verily baptised with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him who should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. When they heard this, (when the disciples of John heard John say this,) they were baptised (by John) in the name of the Lord Jesus." If Paul, and not the historian, be regarded as uttering these words, "When they heard this, they were baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus," it will then appear that the disciples who partook of John's baptism, were not re-baptised by the Apostles.

† This is the sense of the bold figure used by John, as explained by the succeeding "revelation of the mystery which had been hid from ages." But it is not supposed that John's own view of the subject went further than the salvation of the most guilty and wretched among the Jewish people; they who, in the eyes of men, were the most unlikely to become objects of the Divine favour.

The fruits required are not merely professions, but self-denied acts of mercy to the poor; and a faithful, just, and peaceable conduct, in all your various stations and relations. Therefore, "he that hath two coats, let him impart to him who hath none, and he that hath meat, let him do likewise." Ye publicans, "exact no more than that which is appointed you." And ye soldiers, "do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely, and be content with your wages."

4. He further warned them of the danger of rejecting this call, and of the total inefficacy of their carnal worship and outward obedience of the law, to constitute them subjects of the kingdom which he had announced; affirming, moreover, that which necessarily implies the infinite dignity of its King, "And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees; every tree therefore which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. I indeed baptise you with water unto repentance; but he who cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear; he shall baptise you with the Holy Spirit, and with fire; whose fan is in his hand, and he will throughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

5. He baptised Jesus, after saying to him, "I have need to be baptised of thee, and comest thou to me?" And in consequence of what he saw and heard on that signal occasion, "he bare record that this is the Son of God."

6. He pointed out to the people the person whose coming he had announced, saying, "Behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world." And thus, also, he more largely testified, after other expressions tending to exalt the glorious Redeemer, and to depreciate himself, "He that cometh from above is above all; he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth; he that cometh from heaven is above all. And what he hath seen and heard, that he testifieth; and no man receiveth his testimony. He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true. For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him. The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand. He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him."

7. All this witness-bearing of John agrees with what was prophesied of him before his birth by an angel, who said, "He shall turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God;" and his prophecy is full of the supernatural qua-

lifications and efficacious ministry of John. So is that of Zacharias, who says, "Thou, child, shalt be called the Prophet of the Highest; for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways; to give knowledge of salvation unto his people, by the remission of their sins, through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the day-spring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace."

Instead, then, of considering John as one who did little more than announce the preaching of the Gospel at an after period, and call his hearers to outward reformation of conduct, let it be confessed that he himself preached the glad tidings of salvation, and that "he was a burning and a shining light." Let it not be forgotten that "he prepared the ways of Jehovah (chiefly) by giving knowledge of salvation to his people by the remission of their sins."

A mere glance of the prophetic description of his work, and of the doctrine which he actually preached, is sufficient to convince an unprejudiced mind that the design of his ministry was to level all distinctions among men, and to cut up by the roots every disposition in their guilty hearts to seek reconciliation with God on the ground of what they had done, or might afterwards do, either avowedly to merit the Divine favour, or to put themselves into a more likely state for obtaining mercy.

All these "strongholds" of rebellion against God, and opposition to his sovereignty, his wisdom, his righteousness, and his grace, must be "pulled down," together with "every imagination, and every high thing which exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, that every thought may be brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ."* In New Testament times John had the honour of being foremost in the assault, and engaging singly in this glorious work of God. This he did roughly, and with an unsparing hand, like his prototype Elias; but he did it with the utmost decision and effect. He took no false step by which any advantage might have been given to his besieged and powerful, but devoted foe.

With those "weapons which are mighty through God," he immediately attacked the most inveterate prejudices of his countrymen; he gave no quarter to their self-righteousness on the one hand, nor to their covetousness or sensuality, or living in the practice of any sin, on the other. He began to "lay unto the root of the trees" the axe which was to hew down a race of carnal worshippers and rejecters of the Messiah, and

* 2 Cor. x. 4, 5.

to devote them to destruction "when wrath should come upon them to the uttermost." He made known to them, as the only means of escaping the wrath of God in this life, and in that which is to come, the glad tidings of salvation through Jesus Christ, who was to come after him; and when he did come, he directed their attention to him as the Son of God, and as the all-atoning sacrifice for the sins of men; extolling in the highest terms his infinite dignity, his mission, his character, and his work; lamenting that few believed the testimony of Jesus; and assuring them that they should have eternal life in believing on him, and that unbelief would land them in everlasting misery.

Will it be said, in the face of all this, that John prepared the way of the Lord merely, or chiefly, or in any degree, by putting his hearers on a course of partial reformation, that by this means they might be more disposed to listen to the instructions of the coming Saviour, and of his Apostles? Is it not evident, on the contrary, that "he commended himself to every man's conscience in the sight of God, by manifestation of the (whole) truth, according to his measure of faith;" that he actually did make real converts, as we have seen, and that he held out nothing but the unquenchable fire of God's wrath to those who rejected his testimony, however unblameable and devout their conduct might be in the eyes of men, and whatever concern they might profess to have about the salvation of their souls?

It is true he called them to repentance and reformation, as doth also the whole Bible from beginning to end. But what human being ever repented of his sins and forsook them without believing the truth of God, which brings salvation, which relieves the guilty conscience, softens the obdurate heart, and purifies the soul? Or how is it possible to bring forth fruits meet for repentance, where there exists not that repentance which God requires and approves? There may be fruit of some kind, but it cannot be that fruit which John demanded. As well may you expect fruit from a lifeless tree as from the dead and carnal hearts of men: there must be a principle of life in the soul before any action can be truly good; the only human work which is well pleasing in the sight of God, is "the work of faith;" the only labour which he approves, is "the labour of love."

Dr Chalmers knows that these things are clearly stated in the Word of God, yet he unaccountably imagines that much good influence towards the salvation of the soul may be produced by the diligent and serious performance of "dead works!" for works of no other description can be performed by those

who are "dead in sins." The Scriptures uniformly maintain that faith in the Lord Jesus Christ produces good works, while Dr Chalmers labours to prove that good works produce faith! Where do the Scriptures teach this?

At the same time, I object not against a general view of preparation, by means of a herald sent to proclaim to all men the same glad tidings which were afterwards more fully revealed, to represent to them their guilt and danger, to announce the coming of the Just One, to declare the important events which would then take place, and to call the multitudes who heard him to repentance and all its genuine fruits. "How shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach except they be sent?——So then, faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God."—Rom. x. 14, 15, 17.

The Lord may be said to prepare the inhabitants of a country who have not formerly enjoyed the benefit of Divine revelation, for obtaining the blessings of redemption, when he sends the Gospel to them; or an individual, when he is providentially led to a place where he hears the Scriptures read, or the doctrine of salvation preached, and is turned from darkness to light; or another, who by means of deep affliction is led to consider his ways, and to seek and find his only consolation in the Gospel of peace. And even the ordinary hearers of the Word, from whatever motives they may be induced to attend places of worship, or to read the Scriptures at home, are blessed with a preparation for coming to the knowledge of the truth. While the Gospel is sounded in their ears, the day of their visitation continues, and they are the subjects of that hearing by which faith cometh. But this is a preparation altogether different from the present object of censure. In the one case, we see the merciful providence of God affording means which never fail to produce their native effects, except from the opposition and enmity of the hearts of men: in the other case, we are told that some persons may reform their lives, and thereby render themselves more likely to become the objects of Divine mercy, as if that mercy had respect to any thing in man, except his guilt and misery.

Natural means, or means which God hath appointed for bringing men to the faith, without which no person could be saved, must not be confounded with a laborious preparatory work of morality and devotion. It is however a cause of deep lamentation that this is done by multitudes of professing Christians. Could I hope to be the honoured though unworthy instrument of convincing Dr Chalmers, of reaching an effectual

caveat to others, and especially of directing to the cheering and all-discovering light of Divine truth some poor benighted souls who groan under the bondage of this doctrine, I should be truly happy. But with respect to stemming the tide of popular opinion, and changing the bias of the human heart, I am in complete despair. Indeed, the salutary effects of the Word of God, in a smaller degree, nay, in the smallest possible degree, can only be produced by the same power which created the world, and raised Christ from the dead, and quickeneth those who are dead in sins.

It is necessary, that I complete what was originally intended, by endeavouring to show that persons who are taught to consider themselves as prepared by their own exertions, are in a less favourable situation than others for becoming obedient to the faith.

Edinburgh, March 2, 1816.

LETTER III.

In my two former letters I have shown, from what appears to me sufficient evidence, that Dr Chalmers has no foundation in the Word of God for asserting that some persons are prepared, and brought into a more likely state than others for receiving the Gospel, by a course of obedience to the law of God, such as they are capable of yielding, before they be "created in Christ Jesus unto good works;" and particularly, that the doctrine of John the Baptist is completely adverse to every idea of this kind. My next attempt shall be to show that the persons whom he considers as prepared, are, many of them, in a less hopeful condition than the hearers of the Gospel in general.

This was declared in plain terms by the Lord Jesus Christ himself, when he thus addressed the chief priests and elders of the people, "Verily I say unto you, that the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not; but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not, that ye might believe him." * To the same purpose he said, upon another occasion when describing John, "All the people who heard him, and the publicans, justified God, being baptised with the baptism

* Matt. xxi. 31, 32.

of John. But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptised of him." *

With respect to these sayings of Christ, Dr Chalmers, after a positive affirmation that "the alone ground of acceptance is the righteousness of Christ imputed to all who believe," and having urged this all-important truth in his usual fervent and impressive manner, thus proceeds: "But some are readier to receive this truth than others. The reforming publicans and harlots of John were in a state of greater readiness to receive this truth, than either the Pharisees, or those publicans and harlots who, unmindful of John, still persisted in their iniquities. And who will be in greater readiness to receive this truth in the present day? Will it be the obstinate and determined doers of all that is sinful, and that, too, in the face of a call that they should do works meet for repentance? Or will it be those who, under the influence of this call, do what the disciples of John did before them, turn them from the evil of their manifest iniquities, and so give proof of their earnestness in the way of salvation?"—P. 21.

The following caution is also given in the Address, "Mark well, that it was not the publicans and harlots who persisted in their iniquities, but they who counted John to be a prophet, and in obedience to his call were putting their iniquities away from them, who had the advantage of the Pharisees. None will surely say, that those of them who continued as they were, were put into a state of preparation for the Saviour, by the preaching of John."—P. 33. Dr Chalmers then endeavours to show that the reformation of the publicans and harlots was more evangelical than that of the Pharisees, which I may be permitted to doubt, if the former as well as the latter continued in their natural state of unbelief and enmity against God. But I shall attend particularly to the above quotations, as they contain the substance of what the author has advanced on this subject, and, in my humble opinion, show the ground of his mistake.

If it were true that none of the disciples of John were believers in the Messiah whom he preached, but only brought into a state of preparation for receiving the truth by the ministry of Christ himself, or after the down-pouring of the Holy Spirit, still the question would remain, how are we to account for the fact, which is so well authenticated, that many of his disciples, let the sense of this term be what it may, were publicans and harlots, while so few of them were priests, elders, scribes, or Pharisees? No hint is given that this was an act

* Luke vii. 29, 30.

of mere sovereignty on the part of God. We are therefore constrained to think, as we are also fully warranted to affirm, that there was something in the characters, and pretensions, and false religious principles of the latter classes, which fortified them against conviction, and made them stand aloof from the messenger of the Lords of Hosts, and treat with sovereign contempt all that he could say to them about salvation, and remission of sins, and the tender mercy of our God, whereby the day-spring from on high had visited them.

This is fully explained by the history of those self-righteous men given by the Evangelists, upon which I cannot enlarge. Their whole attitude and deportment distinctly spoke this language, "Stand by thyself; come not near to me, for I am holier than thou," which rendered them peculiarly odious to Him who "loveth righteousness, and whose name is holy;" for he says concerning them, "These are a smoke in my nose, a fire that burneth all the day." * Their chief object was to maintain a high religious character in the sight of men, by a scrupulous attention to the outward observances of the law of Moses, and to the traditions of the elders; and by exemplifying what the world calls a blameless moral character. "They loved the praise of men more than the praise of God." † And with respect to their listening to the Gospel, or giving it a candid or patient hearing, that they might see its Divine evidence and believe it, this is stated as impossible by him who knew their hearts: "How can ye believe who receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour which cometh from God only?" ‡

Publicans and harlots, who were emphatically called *sinners*, had no such pretensions. By the common consent of all men, their own consciences bearing witness, they were sinners, nothing but sinners, and therefore could not, in the nature of things, be so far removed from a conviction of their need of mercy, as those who preserved in general a decent outside appearance; who "did all their works that they might be seen of men;" who, upon the ground of their own fancied righteous character, also justified themselves before God, and treated sinners with disdain.

The best possible illustration of these two characters is given in the parable of the Pharisee and the publican. § The prayer of the former is a mere vain-glorious boasting in the presence of his Maker, though he uses the decent form of thanking him, while there is no reason to doubt that he attributed his sup-

* Isa. lxv. 5.
† John xii. 43.
‡ John v. 44.
§ Luke xviii. 9—14.

posed progress in virtue to his own good dispositions, and his meritorious exertions. Beside the meagre recital of his negative qualifications, and his good deeds, two things are particularly noticeable. The one is, the disdain with which he treats the self-condemned and bleeding-hearted publican, and the insolent superiority over him which he assumes. The other is his extreme inconsistency and absurdity in professing to offer up any prayer to God, while he had nothing to ask; for there is not one petition in the whole harangue. It would have affronted him to suppose that he needed mercy.

But, with respect to the publican, his very attitude is expressive of self-abasement and deep contrition:—"He, standing afar off, would not so much as lift up his eyes to heaven." His action indicates the violent emotions of his troubled soul:—"He smote upon his breast." And his words, though very few, express all the sensibility, and fervour, and importunity, of which the most wretched of human beings is capable:—"God be merciful to me, a sinner." His only description of himself is, that he was a "sinner;" and he wanted nothing at the hand of God but "mercy," free and sovereign mercy, as it reaches the helpless and otherwise desperate case of the vilest transgressor. Finally, he neither envied the Pharisee, nor despised him, nor resented his unprovoked abuse; he had to do with God alone, the judge of all.

Now, if Dr Chalmers will not admit that reformed expectants were farther from the kingdom of God than unreformed publicans and sinners, I expect, from his candour, at least a fair admission that the good effects which he affirms were produced by John's doctrine on these same publicans and sinners, as described in his (Dr C.'s) Address, indicated a greater readiness in them than in the self-righteous, to pay any sort of promising attention to the Gospel; and that this greater readiness, of which they gave immediate tokens, was not occasioned by reformation and long training, as he inculcates, but by their confessedly sinful characters, which left not the shadow of any rational ground for self-justification. What other reason can be assigned why persons of this description followed him, or were baptised by him, or listened to his instructions, while those who formed a higher estimate of their own characters, treated him with disdain and neglect?

This seems to have been the impression made upon John's own mind by the complexion of his audience; for "when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? * To attempt reconciling

* Matt. iii. 7.

this with its being elsewhere affirmed that "the Pharisees and lawyers were not baptised of John," would require too long an investigation. But the words plainly intimate that John expected publicans and harlots rather than Pharisees and Sadducees to pay attention to his ministry, and that he could not survey those of the two latter classes among his hearers, without expressing his astonishment, describing them in appropriate terms, and showing in the remaining part of his address that they, on account of their vain-glorious boasting, were peculiarly exposed to the vengeance of Almighty God.

Permit me here to observe that it would be doing too much honour to the Pharisees, who are uniformly represented as the grossest hypocrites,* to suppose that they were not at a greater distance from the kingdom of God than the most notorious sinners; but merely not so well prepared to enter into it as reformed sinners, who had put away the evil of their doings, in consequence of the truth of God preached by John having had some sort of partial influence upon their minds. It is very clear that, in the passages under consideration, the Pharisees are contrasted with sinners in their blackest colours, and in their most odious and disgusting form. If the wisdom of Christ saw this necessary for their conviction, why should any who preach his Gospel endeavour to find means of evading so plain a truth?

Keeping in view what has been already stated, I shall attempt a further illustration of this interesting subject, which appears to me intimately connected with just and simple views of the Gospel of our salvation.

The Lord Jesus, who spoke always in plain and intelligible terms, does not give a preference to those sinners who had been reformed. The two descriptions of people whom he sets in opposition to Pharisees, are publicans and harlots. Some persons of respectability might belong to the former, but there could be none such among the latter class; and he evidently speaks of the two classes in general to which that well-known designation *sinners* eminently belonged, declaring that they furnished many converts, while the self-righteous excluded themselves. Nor doth he affirm that the publicans and harlots were in a state of preparation, or would afterwards go into the kingdom of God before the chief priests and elders; but he affirms that they did then go into that kingdom.

In proof of his assertion, he reminds them that "when John

* This is affirmed of them as a body, and not of every individual belonging to that sect; for there were among them "Israelites indeed, in whom was no guile."

came in the way of righteousness, the chief priests and rulers believed him not, but the publicans and harlots believed him;" and that "the publicans justified God, being baptised with the baptism of John," which was "the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins," and therefore a visible token of humiliation in the sight of God, and of forgiveness through the blood of Christ. Their actual contrition is expressed in another passage —They were baptised of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins.* Jesus affirms also, that they did not, like the Pharisees and the lawyers, "reject the counsel of God against themselves." It appears therefore that, loaded with guilt as they then were, they believed the Gospel; and, being thus forgiven and purified, they entered the kingdom of God, as it existed in the days of John.

Not that I suppose all his professed disciples to have been true subjects of the kingdom of heaven. I am far from thinking so. They only whom "he turned to the Lord their God," and who "believed him" testifying of Christ, were of that description; but there is the best authority for saying that these were many.

From the way in which this subject is treated in the Address, it might seem doubtful whether any person entered into the kingdom of heaven till the day of Pentecost. And I admit that this kingdom was not fully established till Jesus the mighty conqueror rose from the dead, and ascended to his heavenly throne; and also, that it did not appear on earth in all its spiritual glory till the Apostles were endued with power from on high. But surely the erection of this kingdom was begun when the messenger of the Lord of Hosts announced the immediate coming of its glorious King; and received a further advancement under the ministry of Christ himself, who said to Nicodemus, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God;"† and who thus also testified concerning its former progress by the ministry of John, as well as under his own ministry, "From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." ‡ These sayings of him who best knew the nature, and the commencement and gradual rise of his own kingdom, are decisive of the matter in question.

This surely was the best of all preparations for the disciples of Jesus himself, and of his forerunner, to fit them for perceiving and enjoying the more abundant revelation of Divine mercy, when the glorious Redeemer in whom they now believed, should finish his work, and rise from the dead, and sit down on the

* Mark, i. 5. † John, iii. 5. ‡ Matt. xi. 12.

right hand of the Majesty on high; from thence pouring down upon his disciples the Holy Spirit of promise. With respect to any other preparation than this, and the proclamation of the Gospel to all men, the Scripture is silent, and therefore I can affirm nothing with certainty; though I question not that there might be among the professed disciples of John many persons who answered to the description in the Address, and thought themselves in a more hopeful state than publicans and sinners. But had they any scriptural grounds on which they could have warrantably founded this good opinion of their own state?

When the heart of a sinner is penetrated with deep conviction and remorse, trembling in the view of judgment to come, and anxious above all things to know how he may be saved, it appears to me that one of four things cannot fail to happen.—1. He will believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thus obtain relief to his guilty conscience, peace with God, the hope of eternal life, and a heart purified from the love of sin. Many instances of this happy issue, blessed be God, are recorded in the New Testament, particularly those of the convicted Jews, persecuting Saul, and the trembling and prostrate jailer. Or, 2. He will reject the counsel of God against himself, continuing under the deepest impressions of Divine wrath, and sink into absolute despair as Judas did. Or, 3. He will suffer those impressions to wear off, and return to his former state of indifference with respect to the life to come, and every thing which is worthy of occupying the rational powers of man. This may take place gradually, and by slow degrees, or instantly, as in the case of Felix. Or, 4. He will get into a round of duties, doing, as he thinks, all that is within the compass of his power to reform his heart and life, and perhaps accompanying these exertions with punctual attention to devotional exercises. And then he will either conclude that all is well with him, or hope that his good endeavours will succeed at last, though he should labour in vain for many years.

The classes which have been mentioned, might be subdivided and multiplied to any extent. But they give the outlines; and there seems to be no case of deep contrition which, with respect to its issue, may not be ranked under one or other of those classes. But observe, they only who belong to the first class are held forth in the Word of God as approved examples of its saving influence; and all the other classes are set there as beacons to give salutary warning of imminent danger. No instance can be produced from the New Testament of any thing in the least degree analogous to the tenets of the fourth class, except the doctrine of the Pharisees, and the errors which judaizing teachers maintained and propagated.

There are various methods of obscuring and darkening the revelation of the free mercy of God to lost sinners through the propitiation of his beloved Son, all of them, less or more, savouring of the doctrine of the Pharisees. But the persons whom I have chiefly in view are those who, though they readily admit that there is no salvation without Christ, and maintain the pure doctrine of the Scriptures with respect to the infinite dignity of his person, the suitableness of his character and offices, and the perfection of his Divine atonement, yet render all this of no avail by pleading for the necessity of some good thing being done on the part of a sinner, before he can actually partake of the benefits which the Son of God hath purchased. According to their doctrine, no person can believe the testimony of God concerning Christ, and obtain forgiveness, and be accepted, guilty as he stands; but he must have something in himself to distinguish him from his fellow-sinners, without which he can have no prospect of receiving a welcome, should he, as a lost sheep, think of returning to Jesus the Shepherd and Bishop of souls.

Notwithstanding unfavourable appearances, I hope better things of Dr Chalmers, because he does not seem to prohibit any one, on his first hearing the truth, from receiving by faith all the blessings of the everlasting Gospel. On the contrary, he frequently insists on the call of the Gospel being immediately addressed to all who hear it, and shows that he considers every person without exception as not merely warranted, but invited, besought, and commanded to believe to the saving of the soul. There are however several passages in the Address, which seem expressly to limit the immediate call of the Gospel to those who possess distinguishing qualities, and thus to throw an insurmountable bar in the way of all who "have no hope, and are without God in the world." The following is one of the passages to which reference has just been made:—

"I tell you a very plain thing, and, if it be true, it is surely of importance that you should know it, when I tell you that, if you are a servant, and are visited with a desire of salvation, then a faithful performance of your daily task is a step without which the object you aim at is unattainable. If you are a son, a more punctual fulfilment of your parents' bidding is another step. If you are a neighbour, a more civil and obliging deportment to those around you is another step. If you are a dealer, the adoption of a just weight and a just measure is another step." Were the persons who are thus addressed considered by Dr Chalmers as believers of the Gospel, it might be thought that he has in view their obtaining, in the world to come, "the end of their faith, even the salvation of their souls;"

and then his admonition would agree with the uniform doctrine of the Scriptures, that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord." But when he assures all who are visited with a desire of salvation, (which certainly is consistent with total ignorance of the Gospel,) that their object is unattainable without a more punctual fulfilment of various duties, it seems to be his immediate wish, and his earnest endeavour, to convince them that they cannot otherwise be brought into a state of salvation in this world; or that they cannot, without being so qualified, obtain justification through the death and resurrection of the Son of God. Thus mere sinners, who constitute the far greater part of mankind, seem to be excluded from every ray of hope, because, with respect to them, salvation is unattainable till they become reformed sinners; and consequently, not one of them can be immediately called to partake of the glorious remedy which God hath provided.

Very different is the account which the Scriptures give of the way in which the first Christians were justified and saved. Their characters while ignorant of the truth are thus described:—"We ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another." And the means of their deliverance are expressed in the following terms:—"But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour towards man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that, being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." * Surely, then, it is a palpable error to say that salvation is unattainable without human works, when the Scriptures affirm that we are saved according to the mercy of God, and not by works of righteousness which we have done. Would it have suited the case of the dying thief, the convicted Jews, or trembling and astonished Saul, fallen to the earth under an overwhelming load of guilt, to tell them that Jesus was the Saviour of sinners, but that, unless they should perform such works as would prepare and qualify them for receiving mercy, salvation was unattainable? The opposite of this is the truth, namely, that *salvation is unattainable, if in any respect, or in any degree, it depend on the works of sinful men.*

Dr Chalmers must have some method, which I cannot perceive, of reconciling in his own mind the preparation for believ-

* Tit. iii. 3—7.

ing the Gospel, for which he contends, with the doctrine of Divine grace, and the absolute freeness of salvation through Jesus Christ alone, for which he also most earnestly pleads. But his doctrine on this head, which I hope he will not long continue to preach, is more likely to persuade his hearers to begin or lengthen out a fruitless work of reformation, than to shut them up to the necessity of fleeing for immediate refuge to lay hold on the hope which God hath set before them. And it is worthy of his most serious consideration, that death and judgment may overtake them, while they are only in a course of preparation for that without which they must perish for ever. In a matter of infinite concern, it is a tremendous thing to speak of years to a mortal being, who knows not what a day may bring forth.

He deviates from the rule of the Word of God, in my apprehension, chiefly with respect to those persons who have received serious impressions, but are yet ignorant of the truth which saves. So soon as he perceives or supposes any thing of this kind, he sets then to work, urging them vehemently to fulfil the law in some degree, by doing all that is within their reach, for the express purpose of bringing them nearer to the kingdom of God, preparing them, and placing them in a more likely situation for entering into that kingdom than those can be supposed to occupy, who, as the Pharisees expressed it, were "altogether born in sins."

Now, surely that doctrine which represents a prepared person as more likely than a mere sinner to obtain salvation through Christ, so far accords with the doctrine of the Pharisees, who considered themselves as the only persons on earth who were prepared for enjoying the favour of God; while they abhorred notorious sinners, denied that they could become subjects of the kingdom of God, and held them as accursed. Yet those very sinners went into the kingdom of God before them. The Apostle Paul adverts to the same thing as excluding, generally, the people of Israel from the blessings of salvation, while the idolatrous and atrociously wicked Gentiles "heard the word of the Gospel, and believed."

"What shall we say, then? That the Gentiles, who followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith. But Israel, who followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law." * Israel as here described seems to point out those of that people who knew

* Rom. ix. 30—32.

something of the Gospel, and were labouring to attain justifying righteousness, either by connecting their obedience to the law of Moses, and their other good deeds, with the all-perfect righteousness of the Son of God, or by some preparatory work which they supposed would qualify them for being justified by faith; for the Apostle affirms that "they had not attained to the law of righteousness, because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law." *As it were*, not avowedly, but in a sort of covert way, probably in words extolling the grace of God, while other symptoms appeared, showing that they had "confidence in the flesh," and were not, therefore, "the true circumcision."

A humbling view is thus given of the total inefficacy of all attempts to gain a foundation of hope towards God, by any human scheme of preparation. The persons who are censured by the Apostle were seriously engaged in the work of self-reformation, and most earnestly desirous of obtaining a perfect righteousness, by which they might be justified from all things; being convinced, by a partial influence of the doctrine of the Apostles, that they could not thus be justified merely by the law of Moses. They completely failed; and no other person ever made the same attempt with better success. *

But the Gentiles who followed not after righteousness, and therefore had no preparation whatever, except the most consummate guilt and wretchedness, are in this passage, as indeed often elsewhere, represented as entering into the kingdom of God before the Jews, who thought themselves fitter and more prepared. There is a contrast here between Jews and Gentiles, similar to that which the Lord himself had drawn between respectable Pharisees and profligate sinners, in such terms as to confound the wisdom of man, to reverse all his ideas of the fitness of things, and to mortify his pride. But it was this which made the Apostle cry out, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen." †

Thus, it appears that all the attempts of sinners to amend

* Some of them, I freely admit, obtained salvation; for "a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith." But surely this was in no respect owing to "the fire which they kindled, and the sparks with which they compassed themselves about." They were saved in a way opposite to all their preconceived ideas, and found that which they never sought before.

† Rom. xi. 33—36.

their ways, with a view to get into a more likely situation for believing the Gospel, are pharisaical, and remove them to a farther distance from the kingdom of heaven than publicans and harlots. No one can enter into that kingdom who has, or imagines himself to have, any ground of glorying over his fellow-sinners, or who entertains a secret thought that he is fitter or more prepared than the vilest malefactor. In affirming this, I say no more than is expressed in a merciful declaration of our blessed Lord, which is a healing balm to the conscience of the most guilty wretch, fitted only for destruction; especially when attention is paid to the occasion on which these soul-reviving words were spoken—"I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." *

EDINBURGH, MARCH 16, 1816.

LETTER IV.

IN considering what may profitably be added to my former Letters, in which Dr Chalmers' method of preparing sinners for the Gospel has been pretty fully discussed, a variety of subjects crowd upon my mind. Some of these I shall now take the liberty of stating, having selected, for the first article, an attempt to show the way of obtaining an interest in Christ.

This is a matter of great importance, and most deeply interesting to self-condemned sinners. Even the Gospel itself, good and precious as the tidings are which it proclaims, could give no consolation, did it not reveal in the most simple, clear, and intelligible terms, how its inestimable blessings may be enjoyed.

Multitudes of Christian teachers have spoken and published the most excellent things concerning the person of Christ, as God manifest in the flesh, his mission and offices, the whole of his mediatory work, the freeness of the grace of God, which reigneth through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord; and in fine, every thing connected with the all-sufficiency, and the absolute security, of that foundation which God hath laid in Zion. But when they come to apply this doctrine to the consciences of awakened sinners, or sinners of any description, it is completely thrown into the shade by a confused, complex, and indecisive manner of stating in what way a poor

* Matt. ix. 10—13.

dying sinner may be made an actual partaker of salvation and eternal glory; or by throwing insurmountable barriers in his way —conditions, qualifications, and pre-requisites of various kinds, which his conscience tells him he is incapable of performing; and which, if he could attain them all, would not bring him to the desired haven of rest.

With a view to aid their hearers in this preparatory work, some preachers inculcate chiefly mental exercises, relating to the extent of their convictions, the genuine nature of their repentance, the purifying of the inner man, and the great exertions which must be made to reach the promised good. Others dwell principally on reformation of external conduct; and in many instances, a great deal has been said relative to a due concern about religion, without sufficiently expressing a definite object; the sincerity of wishes and strivings to obtain deliverance; the necessity of the new birth, representing this as having much dependence on their energetic labour; and the evidences of true conversion; while little comparatively has been spoken about the all-atoning sacrifice of the Son of God, as the alone foundation of a sinner's hope.

There are those also who have gone so far as to insist that because the corrupt state of the hearts of men, their alienation from God, and their love of sin, prevent them from believing the Gospel, therefore all those evils must be remedied before they can understand and give credit to the revelation of Divine mercy. And this change they attribute to some influence of the Spirit of God distinct from the truth revealed in the Scriptures, and preparatory to the faith of it; though the Word of God never gives us the smallest hint of any saving operation on the minds of men, except by means of revealed truth, which is mighty through God to accomplish all the purposes of his grace, and by which the Holy Spirit uniformly operates. Men are "born again by the incorruptible seed of the Word of God;" * "begotten by the word of truth;" † and Jesus thus prays for those whom the Father had given him, "Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth." ‡ The Holy Spirit, who is also designated by him "the Spirit of the truth," ‖ acts as the Spirit and soul of the truth, or of the Word which preaches peace to guilty men; he is "the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ," § which knowledge is all contained in the writings of the Old and New Testaments, left on record by "holy men of God, who spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit."

These are samples of the many grievous lets and hinderances

* 1 Pet. i. 23. † James, i. 18. ‡ John, xvii. 17.
‖ John, xiv. 17, xv. 26. xvi. 13. § Eph. i. 17.

which have been thrown in the way of broken-hearted sinners obtaining rest to their souls in Christ; while speculative professors have turned them to self-righteous purposes, and others, who have partially felt the influence of the Gospel, have been "ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth." Such leaders, instead of "going through the gates, preparing the way of the people, casting up the highway, gathering out the stones, and lifting up a standard for the people," * as was done by the forerunner of the Prince of Peace, throw stumbling-blocks in the way of the people, and "cause them to err."

How, then, are the forgiveness of sins and all the blessings of salvation to be obtained? Most readily I answer, *By faith alone, in opposition to all works, and labour, and good dispositions, and merit of every kind, on the part of him who is justified.* This is so often repeated, and so fully explained in the Word of God, that one would think every person who carefully reads the Scriptures would clearly perceive it. "He that believeth shall be saved." † "The just shall live by faith." ‡ "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." ‖ "These are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name." § "If thou confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the Scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek; for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." ¶

That the will of God in this particular might be the more clearly perceived, and that we might relinquish all attempts to procure his favour by our own works of any description whatever, faith and works are often brought to view in the Scriptures at once, and contrasted in the strongest terms. "By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast." ** "We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified." †† "Where is boasting

* Isaiah, lxii. 10. † Mark, xvi. 16. ‡ Hab. ii. 4.
‖ Acts, xvi. 31. § John, xx. 31. ¶ Rom. x. 9—13.
** Eph. ii. 8. †† Gal. ii. 15, 16.

then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay; but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude, that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." * And if it be possible to give a still more explicit and decisive verdict on this point, which many consider as a dangerous extreme, you have it in these words: "Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." † Faith corresponds with grace, and with the promise, while works are opposite to both. "It is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed." ‡ Faith arrogates nothing to itself; it gives full place to free and sovereign mercy, and ascribes salvation solely and exclusively to our God who sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.

On this subject it seems only necessary to add, that the life of faith must continue as it began. A redeemed sinner, animated by the motives of the Gospel, "serves God acceptably." But how much soever he may abound in the work of the Lord, he cannot thus lay any other foundation of hope than that which relieved his guilty soul when he first obtained, by faith, without works, the justification of the ungodly. While praying for daily forgiveness through the blood of atonement, he still finds occasion to say, "If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared." ‖ And in this point of view, totally discarding good works, he says with Paul, "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." §

Nor can he obtain relief to his troubled mind, when conscious of having departed from the living God, by seeking to find evidences of his calling and election. At such a period these are fled; and the recollection of former experience only aggravates his present consciousness of ingratitude and rebellion.

* Rom. iii. 27, 28.

† Rom. iv. 4, 5.—I cannot deny myself the pleasure of transcribing part of Dr Owen's illustration of this text, not as an authority, but to show with what clearness and precision he could write on this important subject:—

"It must be granted that God justifieth the ungodly. That is, say some, those who formerly were ungodly, not those who continue ungodly when they are justified. And this is most true. All that are justified were before ungodly; and all that are justified are at the same instant made godly. But the question is, whether they are godly or ungodly antecedently in any moment of time to their justification? If they are considered as godly, and are so indeed, then the Apostle's words are not true, that God justifieth the ungodly; for the contradictory proposition is true, God justifieth none but the godly."—Owen on Just. ch. xviii. p. 553, Glasg. edit.

‡ Rom. iv. 16. ‖ Psal. cxxx. 3, 4. § Gal. vi. 14.

Nothing is capable of relieving his soul except the same glad tidings which are preached to all men, and when believed give peace and joy to the most vile and wretched. He must resume the attitude of the publican, which indeed he ought never to have left, and say, "God be merciful to me a sinner."

Having thus completely set aside all human works and merit in relation to our acceptance with God, and ascribed every thing to faith, the next question will naturally be, What is faith?

Were this understood to mean, What am I called to believe as the ground of my justification and peace with God? the question would be rational, and in the highest degree important. But when the object in view is to get a definition of faith or belief as it exists in the human mind, the inquiry is trifling and unnecessary, were it not that the subject has been already darkened and perplexed. There were no disputes of this kind in the apostolic age. Both Christians and infidels knew, without any teaching, what was signified by believing the Gospel; and the only ground of controversy which then existed was, Whether is the testimony of the Apostles true or false? In my opinion, the mist which in later ages has been artfully thrown on this subject, which excels in plainness and simplicity, must have owed its origin to the prince of darkness and his chief emissary the Man of Sin. A philosophical or scholastic definition of faith, which cannot be understood by plain and illiterate men, ought to have no place among Christians as any part of their religion.

Why is not as simple and decisive an answer given to the question, What is faith? as would be given to, What is hope, love, or joy? or, What is fear, hatred, or grief? which, so far as the Gospel is concerned, are, every one of them, as well understood by all the world as by the most acute philosopher. This may be accounted for. Faith is much extolled throughout the Scriptures. Every spiritual enjoyment is attributed to it, not indeed for its own intrinsic merit, but because it is the means of receiving freely all the blessings of redemption, which cannot otherwise be enjoyed; and particularly the leading and capital blessing of justification. "We are justified by faith; and faith is imputed for righteousness," without which there could be no justification. Therefore the self-righteous bias which is natural to man, predisposes him to approve of descriptions, or reasonings, the object of which is to show that faith cannot be merely that which is signified by the term in other cases; but that, in its own nature, it must be considered as "doing some great thing," instead of viewing it simply as hearing the voice of God in his oracles of eternal truth.

Of all the untenable and contradictory things which have been avowed by men of talents, learning, and piety, this is the most wonderful, that faith, which is every where in the Scriptures contrasted with works in the matter of justification, has itself been converted into a meritorious work, containing in its nature or essence almost every Christian virtue and excellence. We have heard much of the great work of believing; and all its various acts and qualities have been largely described by many eminent theological writers; producing this among other evils to which I implore the serious attention of the reader, that awakened sinners are induced to pay more regard to the exercises of their own minds, than to the glorious Gospel of Christ, which is the only sovereign remedy for all the evils of the human heart.

In no other case does any man suppose that he performs a great task, or one in which there is any merit, when he believes a well attested fact. If the evidence produced for the truth of a human testimony be clear and satisfactory in all its parts, and corroborated by many circumstances, the truth of which is beyond all dispute, we are laid under a necessity of believing it, and the whole merit of this is due to the evidence by which we are convinced; we cannot reasonably claim the smallest portion of that merit. No subject has been so much darkened by irrational speculations, as that which is in itself the most luminous of all subjects—the religion of HIM who is THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD.

The use which has been made of metaphorical expressions, such as, "receiving Christ, coming, and fleeing to him, trusting in him, eating his flesh and drinking his blood," &c., tends to darken the mind with respect to the nature of faith. Instead of explaining the metaphorical term by the simple one, which is the just and natural way, the simple term is explained by that which is metaphorical, and every thing is thrown into inextricable confusion. To receive Christ, is to receive or believe the testimony concerning him. Coming and fleeing to him, and trusting in him, are immediate effects produced by faith. "He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." * So, also, we flee not to a place of refuge, till we first believe that it exists, and will afford us safety. Nor do we trust or put confidence in any object, till we believe that it is capable of yielding expected aid. Eating the flesh and drinking the blood of the Son of man, is a most lively description of the real enjoyment of the blessings which flow from his Divine atonement, and is confessedly

* Heb. xi. 6.

metaphorical. This, also, is evidently the effect of believing in him. It is equally clear that eating and drinking are not terms of the same import with believing, and that faith in Christ does not exist in that soul where there is no relish for this Divine food, by which alone the soul can live.

Faith, therefore, is neither more nor less than credence or belief, whether it respect a Divine or a human testimony. True, indeed, "if we receive the witness or testimony of men, the witness or testimony of God is greater." * But this comparison shows that the *nature* of faith is the same in both cases, though the degree of it, whatever this may be in reality, ought to be immensely different. The testimony of God relates to things infinitely better and more important, and it justly demands an incomparably higher degree of faith, as being the testimony of "Him who cannot lie."

To believe God, is to assent to the truth of what he hath spoken. Thus it is said, "He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true;" † while "he that believeth not God hath made him a liar, because he believeth not the record which God gave of his Son." ‡ Faith recognises the Divine and infallible evidence by which the Gospel proves itself to be the truth of God, "judges him faithful who hath promised," ‖ and "receives the word which he hath spoken, not as the word of men, but (as it is in truth) the Word of God." §

In the simple description of faith which has here been given, there is a perfect coincidence with a principle which cannot be contradicted without dishonouring the great Author of Divine revelation, namely, that if God hath been pleased to reveal to us a way of salvation, not confined to any one class of men, but extending to all nations, ranks, and characters, it necessarily follows that he speaks to us in a language which all understand—in simple, clear, and unequivocal terms, equally adapted to the capacity of the most accomplished philosopher or theologian, as to that of the meanest peasant. Holding this as a self-evident principle, which few will venture to deny, how is it possible to reconcile it with dark, mysterious, and unintelligible views of the nature of faith, which God requires of all the hearers of the Gospel, and without which no person can be saved?

Faith then, or belief, as the term is used in the Word of God, signifies that which all men, in the common transactions of life, understand it to mean; there is in it no mystery, no ambiguity,

* 1 John v. 9. † John iii. 33. ‡ 1 John v. 10.
‖ Heb. xi. 11. § 1 Thess. ii. 13.

nor in short any thing but what the term itself expresses.* The Gospel too is, in its own nature, equally clear and intelligible, and would appear such to every rational being, were it not that "the light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not."

* The candid, enlightened, and independent mind of the late Dr Erskine, (who, as Dr Chalmers now does, refused to be held in systematic fetters,) perceived that faith, as it respects the Gospel, is the same intelligible thing which every one knows it to be when it has reference to a human testimony. He has treated the subject with so much perspicuity and strength of argument, that I am induced to present the reader with a few extracts from his "Dissertation on the Nature of Christian Faith," which I did not re-examine till after my Letters were finished. This work is valuable, as it contains simple and Scriptural views of what faith or belief is, and of what the truth is which we are called to believe—two things which are essentially and inseparably connected. It contains, also, many useful remarks on the internal evidence of the truth of the Word of God; on the necessity of the work of the Holy Spirit in communicating to the minds of men that glorious light which shines in the Gospel, and thus enabling them to perceive its Divine evidence; on the sanctifying influence of the truth, when it is received as the Word of God; and on the experimental proof which results to believers from their being the subjects of Divine teaching.

Throwing off the restraint which is generally imposed by popular opinion, and assuming the calm intrepidity which becomes a champion for the truth, he proceeds thus:—

1. "The Holy Ghost, in the sacred oracles, means to be understood, and therefore speaks to men in their own language, and uses words in their common acceptation. Faith, therefore, in the Scripture, does not signify choice, affection, temper, or behaviour; for, in common language, it does not signify these, but merely persuasion or assent, and commonly a persuasion founded on testimony.

"The meaning of the word *believe*, in the following Scriptures, is plain to the most cursory reader:—Exod. iv. 1, 'But, behold, they will not believe me.' Ibid. ver. 5, 'That they may believe that the Lord God of their fathers hath appeared unto thee.' 1 Sam. xxvii. 12, 'And Achish believed David, saying, He hath made his people Israel utterly to abhor him.' Prov. xxvi. 25, 'When he speaketh fair, believe him not.' Hab. i. 5, 'I will work a work in your days, which ye will not believe though it be told you.' John iv. 21, 'Woman, believe me, the hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father.' James ii. 19, 'Thou believest that there is one God: the devils also believe and tremble.'—I may venture to say, if Christians had consulted systems less, and Scripture and their own experience more, they would not have affixed to believing, in other passages, a sense entirely different from what it bears in these.

"Faith purifies the heart, Acts xv. 9; worketh by love, Gal. v. 6.; and discovers itself sincere by the performance of good works, James ii. 18. Faith, therefore, is not holiness, love, or new obedience, unless the effect is the same with the cause, or the evidence with the thing proved. He who confounds faith with any of these, might as well plead that there is no difference between the sun in the firmament, and the fruits of the earth brought forth and ripened by his genial rays; or between natural life, and

When these two incontrovertible facts are perceived, an immense advantage is gained by those who have been labouring in the dark, or enjoying only a very dubious and partial relief

the actions of a living man. And yet many writers on the nature of faith seem to have forgot, that it is one question, what is faith? and another, what is inseparably connected with it? and what are the fruits that spring from it?

* * * * * * * * * * * *

2. "Other ideas of faith, substituted in the place of persuasion, are better calculated to flatter the pride of man, that his acceptance with God is founded on something worthy and excellent in the frame of his mind, in the choice of his will, and in the bias of his affections. For that very reason these ideas must be false. The office assigned to faith in the plan of salvation, is assigned it for this purpose, that all pretences to merit may be borne down, and the sovereignty and freedom of God's grace in bestowing salvation may appear. Rom. iv. 16, 'Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace.' Faith has no moral efficacy towards procuring our pardon and acceptance. If one is proud of assenting to a truth, when that assent is constrained by evidence, may he not with equal reason be proud that he believes that the sun is in the firmament, when his eyes are struck with the meridian splendour of that glorious luminary?

3. "Assent or persuasion is the only notion of faith, which, without straining, will apply to every Scripture, where any kind of faith is mentioned. Let the unbiassed reader consult his Bible, and judge for himself.

* * * * * * * * * * * *

"Dr Owen, in his Catechism, has judiciously decided the question I am now canvassing. 'Faith (says he) is in the understanding, in respect of its being and subsistence; in the will and heart, in respect of its effectual workings.'

4. "It does not invalidate my reasoning, that it is said, Rom. x. 10, 'For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness.' The heart is there opposed, not to the assent of the understanding, but to the profession of the lips; for it immediately follows, 'and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.' Nor are other places wanting in the sacred oracles, where the heart means the intellectual powers. Thus Exod. xxviii. 3, 'Thou shalt speak unto all the wise-hearted, whom I have filled with the spirit of wisdom, that they may make Aaron's garments.' Deut. xxix. 4, 'Yet the Lord hath not given you an heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear unto this day.' 1 Kings iv. 29, 'And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the sea-shore.'"—*Theological Dissertations, 2d edit.* p. 158—163.

This able and judicious writer likewise gives the following decided opinion on the whole merits of the case:—

"I account *that* faith only saving, which is accompanied with an approbation of the Gospel scheme of salvation in all its parts, which leads us to come to God through Christ for pardoning mercy, and sanctifying grace, which purifies the heart from immoderate love to the world, and produces an unfeigned love to all God's commandments. Yet I cannot see that confounding faith with its inseparable attendants, or necessary effects, is consistent with the important doctrine of justification by faith."—*Ibid.* Preface, p. 4, 5.

from the Gospel. The question will not then be, How am I to believe? What shall I do to prepare myself for receiving the mercy of God? By what means shall I stir up my soul to the exercise of faith in Christ, which, though it be so named, is yet a most laborious work, requiring all the exertion of which the human mind is capable? No. It will be, What doth God testify concerning the person and work of his beloved Son? What hath Jesus done for the salvation of lost sinners? And to whom is the promise of salvation made? If the enquirer find what he now seeks, and believe the truth which is plainly and simply revealed in the Gospel, he then says with Paul as the chief of sinners, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." * His conscience is relieved; he is "reconciled to God by the death of his Son;" his heart is renewed; he "worshippeth God in the spirit;" he "rejoiceth in Christ Jesus, and hath no confidence in the flesh."

Another object of inquiry which may now be briefly considered, is, by what means is the faith of the Gospel produced? on which some remarks have already been made. The means there described, are chiefly those which are used by the Lord himself in the execution of his gracious purpose; and it ought to be always kept in view, that no means short of those which he alone can employ, will ever communicate the saving knowledge of the truth. The exceeding greatness of Divine power which wrought in Christ, when God raised him from the dead, can only quicken dead sinners, illuminate their darkened minds, and make them obedient to the faith.

But it may be further remarked that the Holy Spirit, though never without the Word, operates on the minds of men by means of rational motives, which in the Word of God are addressed to the understanding, the conscience, and every passion of the human heart. By man's apostasy from God, all his faculties are depraved. But he still possesses an understanding to discern good and evil; a conscience to approve the one and to condemn the other; affections which may be employed in loving, serving, and enjoying God, and which may be alarmed with the fear of future evil, or made joyful in the hope of future good; and a will by which, as a free agent, he may choose that which is good, and refuse that which is evil. By these I mean the natural powers of man; for he certainly does not possess moral ability to love and obey his Maker. And why? Just because his corrupt and perverse inclination will not suffer him to do so. Were

* 1 Tim. i. 15.

he decidedly to will this, it would be accomplished; but he delights in sin, and chooses that which God abhors.

Now, the Word of God contains every thing which is suited in the highest degree to enlighten the understanding, to alarm the conscience, to fill the heart with anguish and dismay; to allay the fear and grief which it hath occasioned, by presenting an all-sufficient remedy of God's providing; and to subdue the obstinate, perverse, and rebellious will.

Two leading truths are eminently the subjects, and may indeed be considered as the sum of Divine revelation—the lost and ruined state of man, and his recovery by Jesus Christ. In an astonishing variety of expression and argument, and often accompanied with entreaty and earnest expostulation, these are brought forward in every way which can be supposed to affect the hearts and consciences of men. What then is the design and the natural tendency of such merciful and energetic representations? Is it not to lead the hearers of the Gospel to make a solemn pause in their mad career, to consider their ways, and to search the Scriptures, where they will see opened up and unfolded all the circumstances of their guilt and danger, and all the counsels of redeeming love?

Following out this train of things, it is not only lawful, but highly necessary, to urge upon the consciences of sinful men their great and imminent danger; the demands of the law and justice of God, in their full extent: the call of the Gospel to believe in Christ for salvation, and to bring forth fruits meet for repentance. And I can see no other way in which any person can believe the Gospel than by an attentive consideration of its evidence and its import, which is hardly to be expected till he have some conviction of his lost and perishing condition. This searching of the Scriptures by those who heard the doctrine of Paul at Berea, is mentioned as an example of the way in which faith cometh. "These were more noble than those of Thessalonica, in that they received the Word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily whether these things were so. Therefore many of them believed." *

These are means of Divine appointment, and must always accompany the supernatural teaching of the Holy Spirit, or be considered as a part of that teaching, whether the person be immediately or gradually brought to the knowledge of the truth. They present no obstacle; they impose upon him no grievous and impossible task; they fill him with no conceit of his reformed life or mental exercises; their direct tendency is to bring

* Acts xvii. 11, 12.

him to the light of God's truth, and to convince him that he cannot be justified as righteous in his own person, but as "a sinner and without strength;" they afford him no ground of consolation except this—"God justifieth the ungodly."

In order to show more fully what is here intended, I shall give a few hints respecting the evidence of the truth of Christianity, by which it is demonstrably proved that God himself, the judge of all, speaks to us in the glad tidings of great joy which are preached to all people, and which therefore are with the utmost propriety called "THE GLORIOUS GOOD NEWS OF THE BLESSED GOD."

Men are not required to believe the Gospel without the most complete and satisfactory evidence of its truth. And this evidence is not placed at a distance, so as to render it perceptible only in consequence of a long and laborious investigation of arguments on both sides, or deep researches amidst the dark regions of antiquity; for none of these attempts are within the reach of the ignorant and the unlearned, who are constantly represented in the Word of God as at least not being in less favourable circumstances for Divine teaching than men of erudition and science. No. The Gospel is a revelation from the God of heaven, and the proof of this requires no foreign aid. ITS IMPORT IS ITS EVIDENCE. There is in it divine simplicity and majestic glory; it is a complete delineation of the character of the true God, and gives an infinite display of all his glorious perfections. The truth which he hath revealed, namely, that God spared not HIS OWN SON, but delivered him up for all his people, is that which could not have entered into the heart of man; and seeing it transcends all his conceptions, and baffles all his wisdom, it is utterly impossible that it could have been a cunningly devised fable.

"The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handiwork;" * by giving a visible display of his infinite wisdom, his almighty power, and his abundant goodness to his creature man. And so with regard to all his other works, of which the Apostle Paul affirms in general terms, "The invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things which are made, even his eternal power and Godhead." † We cannot meditate on any of his stupendous works, nor even survey his workmanship in its minutest form, without clearly perceiving the finger of God, the manifest and indelible traces of the incommunicable perfections of the great Jehovah. *And shall we attribute less to the Gospel, which in an infinitely higher*

* Psal. xix † Rom. i. 20.

degree manifests his glory? How dim and feeble are the rays of the sun in the firmament, who, as he runs his race, proclaims to all nations the existence and the glory of the invisible God, when compared to the bright and healing beams of the Sun of righteousness, the Word made flesh, who showed forth "his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father," when "he dwelt among men full of grace and truth;" who declared his Father's name; who, in his death as an atoning sacrifice for sin, gave the fullest evidence that "GOD IS LOVE;" and who is himself "the image of the invisible God?"

In the testimony of the Gospel, we perceive the fulfilment of a prophecy thus describing the power, and dominion, and ineffable glory, with which the King of Zion was to be environed, when "the Lord God should give unto him the throne of his father David." "Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed when the Lord of Hosts shall reign in Mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously."‡

Certainly, therefore, it can be none of the dictates of true wisdom which has led the advocates of revealed truth to throw into the shade, or to shut up in a corner of their voluminous works, the most conclusive and irresistible evidence that the Bible is in very deed a revelation from God, and to publish hundreds, or perhaps thousands of volumes on the other evidences, which are less attainable, as well as less convincing and satisfactory.

It is far from being my intention to depreciate the evidence of the truth of Christianity which arises from miracles, the fulfilment of prophecy, the success which attended the labours of the first ministers of the Word, not only without human aid, and destitute of every qualification which the wisdom of man judges necessary for the successful promulgation of a new religion, but under the weight of the most determined opposition on the part of those in power, and the whole world up in arms against them. These and other external evidences prove the Divine original of the sacred Scriptures. They co-operate with the Gospel in reaching conviction to the minds of unbelievers, and they confirm the faith of those who believe. Considered apart from the evidence which is inherent in the Gospel, they stop the mouths of gainsayers, arrest the attention of the thoughtless, and confirm the faith of believers. They may frequently also prevail so far as to convince an avowed infidel, and to make him a professing Christian of some sort. But I venture to affirm that no person was ever made a true

* Isaiah xxiv. 23.

convert to Christianity without perceiving the decisive, overpowering, and Divine evidence, which shines like a sunbeam in the truth itself, and infallibly proves that God is its author. It must be so, if the Gospel be that which it declares itself to be, "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." *

This evidence, it is true, cannot be discerned in all its captivating excellency, till "He who commanded the light to shine out of darkness" make this very light of the Gospel to shine into benighted hearts. And on this account, it is generally thought better to attempt the gradual conquest of rebellious souls, by means of arguments which are deemed to be fully within the compass of man's rational powers, than to use in a more summary way those weapons which, in the highest sense, "are mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds."

A copious refutation of this argument seems unnecessary, because it will be sufficient to remark that the unenlightened hearers of the Gospel are as incapable of understanding the revelation of the mercy of God in Christ, as they are of perceiving the best evidence of its truth. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." † If, then, it could be argued justly that because men, in a spiritual sense, are blind, therefore there is no propriety in urging upon them the most powerful and convincing evidence that the Gospel is the testimony of God; it evidently follows, that there would be an equal degree of impropriety in preaching the Gospel to those "who have the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their hearts;" ‡ or in calling them, while in this state of ignorance, to repent and believe the Gospel! The reverse is the just conclusion. It is impossible to give a stronger argument than the deplorable ignorance of men, for calling their attention to the light which shines in the Gospel, and to the evidence by which it clearly manifests itself to be from God.

We cannot have just views of this part of the subject, without considering the nature of that spiritual darkness in which all unbelievers are involved. Indifference towards the Gospel, contempt of it, or opposition to it, arise not, in any case, from mere ignorance. They who reject the counsel of God know as much of it as tends to provoke their aversion; for "Every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light,

* 2 Cor. iv. 6. † 1 Cor. ii. 14. ‡ Eph. iv. 18

lest his deeds should be reproved." * And Jesus said to the Jews, "Why do ye not understand my speech? Even because ye cannot hear my word;" † that is, ye cannot endure my word; it is so offensive that ye are incapable of giving it a patient hearing. The condition of such persons is thus truly and emphatically described, "Their eyes have they closed, lest they should see with their eyes, and should be converted, and God should heal them." ‡ Still, however, their consciences bear witness for God, while the sinful bias of their hearts prevails; for the Apostles, "by manifestation of the truth, commended themselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God." ‖

There is ample room, therefore, in declaring the testimony of God, for showing "the self-evidencing light and power of the Scriptures," as Dr Owen justly terms this Divine evidence; and for endeavouring to convict those who lend a deaf ear to the Gospel, of their wilful, obstinate, and perverse rejection of this glorious light. "The marvellous light of God" shineth around them; and, in order to perceive it, they need only that their eyes should be opened. Nay, it requires the most criminal exertion on their part, aided by the prince of darkness, to prevent them from seeing it. They suffer their minds to be blinded by the god of this world; they close their eyes that they may not see the light of Divine truth; they shut their ears, lest they should hear the terrible voice of the law, or the mild and merciful, though humbling call of the Gospel; and they harden their hearts against the fear of God.

This subject is well worthy of a more full consideration; but to do justice to it would require a volume devoted solely to so great a purpose.

A few thoughts on the practical influence of the Gospel, will form the subject of the two following Letters.

Edinburgh, March 30, 1816.

LETTER V.

The nature of the discussion in which I am engaged, has led me to dwell chiefly on the doctrine of the true grace of God; the inviting and unfettered way in which the Gospel was preached by the Lord Jesus Christ, and by his inspired messengers; the inefficacy of all attempts on the part of any man to render

* John iii. 20.
† John viii. 43.
‡ Acts xxviii. 27.
‖ 2 Cor. iv 2.

himself a more fit object of Divine mercy, and the self-righteous tendency of several schemes which, under the specious plea of using means for bringing sinners to Christ, foster their pride, and seem to turn the Gospel itself into a law of works. In a comparative sense, therefore, I have treated sparingly of those works which correspond with faith, and are its native and never-failing fruits. This deficiency I shall now attempt in some measure to supply, by showing that faith without works is dead.

In reference to the justification of sinners, two things more opposite in their nature, or more avowedly and strongly contrasted in the Word of God, than faith and works, do not exist. But, in another point of view, there are not two things within the compass of human thought which more completely and harmoniously agree. Not only, indeed, does the most perfect harmony subsist between them, but that very faith which, in the sense explained, is the opposite of working, and refuses all connexion or compromise with the best works which man can perform, is, notwithstanding, the only principle from which works acceptable in the sight of God can flow.

Dr Chalmers has with great propriety endeavoured to convince those who have any sort of religious profession, however flimsy, that there can be no sincerity in such profession, if they continue in the practice of those sins which even from worldly motives they might lay aside; and I would especially add to his catalogue of sins—"taking the name of God in vain," as being in a peculiar manner totally inconsistent with "fearing his glorious and fearful name." When this is urged for the purpose of alarming the conscience, and not with a view to make works produce faith, it meets with my entire approbation.*

He also justly exposes the hypocrisy of another class, who make an apparently serious profession of Christianity, talk much about religion, and perform many outward acts of devotion;

* Whether his plan or mine be more likely to produce a moral reform in society at large, I cannot determine. But while this, in the estimation of every well-informed Christian, cannot fail to be a most desirable object, and may be aided by a partial influence of the doctrine or precepts of the Gospel, it does not appear that the Apostles in this respect assumed the character of reformers; nor is the smallest hint given of their doctrine having effected this, in any city or country where they preached the Gospel. Their aim was the utter destruction of "the old man with his deeds." The message which they brought was the savour of life unto life to all who believed it, and the savour of death unto death to every one who rejected it, whether he were a notorious sinner, or a reformed moralist, or a hypocritical devotee. The writers of the New Testament have recorded and approved nothing which has any respect to human reformation, either internal or external, other than the saving influence of the truth alone.

but while they pretend to be chiefly occupied with mental exercises, and speculations about cleansing the inner man, they pay little or no attention to their external conduct, and indulge themselves in the habitual practice of many darling sins.* Here I am but partially satisfied with the doubtful censure pronounced in the Address; for such persons are a disgrace to the Christian name: they act in a manner similar to those who are thus described, "They profess that they know God, but in works they deny him, being abominable and disobedient, and to every good work reprobate." †

But there are others of whom better things should be expected, persons who are enlightened in the knowledge of the truth, who seem to have all their happiness in it, and also in many respects live so much under its influence that we dare not say they are false professors, while yet, in some parts of their conduct, they are greatly deficient, and appear to have imbibed rather "the spirit of the world than the Spirit which is of God." They have, it is true, escaped the gross pollutions of the world, and they will not be guilty of flagrant crimes which all agree to condemn. But they give no marked display of the spirit of true Christianity, and seem not to have learned that the influence of the Gospel, without any ostentatious effort, manifests itself in the whole tenor of a Christian's life. It pervades all his intercourse with mankind, and teaches him to live soberly and righteously, as well as godly. It accompanies him in his closet, in the solemn ordinances of public worship, in all the bustling scenes of life, and in his becoming and lawful amusements. ‡ It is the grand moving spring of all the duties which are incumbent on him, in the various stations and relations in which he may be placed. It regulates all his proceedings in

* This character is somewhat different from that referred to in the Address, because it appears to me, as it does to the reviewers, that the latter is one which can scarcely be supposed to occur in real life.

† Tit. i. 16.

‡ There may be some who will startle at ranking amusements, however qualified, with the other particulars mentioned above. But if it be admitted, as it will be in general by the most serious, that there is such a thing as innocent recreation, I know not how it can be more effectually circumscribed within lawful bounds, than by maintaining that upon all such occasions a disciple of Christ must be under the influence of the Gospel. I am persuaded that no true fearer of God would attend the theatre, or balls, assemblies, horse-races, and other public diversions, were he uniformly acting under a deep conviction that he ought to pray for the Divine blessing on every thing in which he is engaged, this being evidently included in "praying always." No such person, I believe, would venture so to pray, whether the amusement were immoral in its own nature, or foolish and inexpedient; and much sinful conduct in other respects might thus be prevented.

the family to which he belongs, whether he be a master, or a servant, or an inmate of any other description. It prescribes to him, and leads him to practise, every thing which is just, and honourable, and praiseworthy, in his lawful calling, spurring his industry and curbing his ambition. And I request particular attention to this one remark—There may be much righteousness and sobriety* where godliness is totally wanting; but there cannot be a spark of true godliness without righteousness and sobriety.

Some of the arguments which prove the sanctifying nature of the Gospel may now be considered.

It has often been observed and clearly proved from the Scriptures, that freedom from the dominion of sin in this life, and complete deliverance from it in the life to come, form an essential part of that salvation which Jesus came to bestow, and are inseparably connected with believing the Gospel of the grace of God. This of itself is sufficient to confound the adversaries of the doctrine of grace, who never seem to understand, or at least have not the candour to admit, that the Scriptures intend any thing more by the salvation of sinners than deliverance from the wrath to come. But this is a false view of the subject, as appears from innumerable passages, and indeed from the whole tenor, of Divine revelation. When Jesus, according to the import of his name, is represented as "saving his people from their sins;" when God the Father is said to have "saved them, and called them with an holy calling;" when "all the ends of the earth are invited to look unto Jesus and be saved;" and when salvation is promised to him that believeth;—salvation from the power of sin, as well as from deserved wrath, is most certainly intended. And, indeed, the latter without the former would be no blessing; for while a person is not delivered from the love of sin, and renewed in the spirit of his mind, he is incapable of serving and enjoying God in this world; and could we suppose him, with the same dispositions, to inhabit the mansions of the blessed, he would be completely miserable.

But more than this is included in the "good news" of sanctification, which we may safely consider as one-half of the import of the Gospel. Deliverance from sin is the ultimate design of God in the wonderful display of his mercy towards guilty rebels. It is natural for us, when conscious that we are sinners who deserve everlasting condemnation, to be peculiarly struck with the exceeding riches of Divine grace, which hath provided

* By these are meant the same actions, as to outward appearance, which "the grace of God teacheth," but flowing from selfish or prudential motives, or from a person's desire of establishing his own righteousness, in opposition to "the grace of God, which bringeth salvation."

a ransom, that we might be delivered from the pit of destruction; and to consider the restoration of the image of God, the new heart which he giveth, and holiness in all manner of conversation, though in themselves highly important, yet as comparatively of inferior moment, and not so much a leading object in the plan of redemption, as following of course from our being justified, and brought into a state of favour with God. And it is true that, in the order of nature, forgiveness and the hope of eternal life are prior to sanctification, and that all acceptable service flows from the influence of the love of God, manifested in the free forgiveness of sins through the atonement of his beloved Son. But does it not from this also appear that the end which God hath in view is to cleanse us from our natural pollution, and that his redeeming our souls from destruction, and giving us good hope, are the means employed for that purpose? An end worthy of God, and means beyond expression great and suitable, and which eminently display his glory!

This may serve to give us higher views of the great blessing of sanctification, which, though very partially enjoyed in this imperfect state, is yet experienced by all the children of God from their first perception of the saving truth, and goes on progressively till they be "without fault before the throne of God."

The whole of the Divine procedure in the work of redemption, and all the motives of the Gospel, lead directly and powerfully to this glorious issue.

God the Father, in making choice of his people from everlasting, and giving them to Christ to be redeemed by him, had this special purpose in view. "He hath chosen them in Christ before the foundation of the world." With what intent? "That they should be holy and without blame before him in love." * "Those whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate." To what enjoyment? "To be conformed to the image of his Son." † They are likewise affirmed to be "his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that they should walk in them." ‡ And the means by which this is effected are also plainly and simply declared; "God hath from the beginning chosen them to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." ‖ It thus appears that the decree of God embraces, as its ultimate and crowning object, the complete deliverance of his redeemed from sin; and, with a view to this, ascertains their sanctification by the faith of the Gospel in this present life. Here, then, the matter rests upon the firm decree

* Eph. i. 4. † Rom. viii. 29. ‡ Eph. ii. 10. ‖ 2 Thess. ii. 13.

of Him "whose counsel shall stand, and who will do all his pleasure."

The promises of God also make ample provision for the sanctification of his people. This is specially contained in the new covenant, wherein Jehovah saith, "I will put my law in their hearts, and write it in their inward parts." * And again, "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them." † In short, every promise of the new covenant either expresses or implies this great design of Him who made it. The Apostle Peter shows this, when he affirms that "God hath given to his people exceeding great and precious promises; that by these they might be partakers of the Divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." ‡ And the Apostle Paul uses this argument on the same subject; "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." ‖

All the promises, therefore, whether they have a direct reference to salvation from wrath or from sin, have a purifying tendency on the minds of believers; and being the promises of Him whose faithfulness is everlasting, they must and will be fulfilled. With respect to this ground of consolation also, as well as the hope of the eternal inheritance, he hath interposed his oath; for the prophecy of Zacharias, after blessing God for visiting and redeeming his people, proceeds thus: "To perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant, the oath which he sware to our father Abraham, that he would grant unto us, that we, being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our lives." §

This was also one great end of the death of Christ, and of necessity, therefore, must be accomplished. The Apostle Peter, when recommending to Christians an imitation of the patient, submissive, and holy conduct of the Lord Jesus, brings forward, as the Apostles often do, the highest instance of his love and obedience, saying, "Who his ownself bare our sins in his own body on the tree." This no doubt signifies redemption from the curse of the law. But for what purpose were they thus

* Jer. xxxi. 33. † Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27. ‡ 2 Pet. i. 4.
‖ 2 Cor. vii. 1. § Luke i. 72—74.

redeemed? He gives the answer,—"that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness." * The Apostle Paul declares the same thing to the Galatians: "Our Lord Jesus Christ gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father." † He likewise affirms, in writing to Titus, that "the great God and our Saviour gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." ‡ And in his epistle to the Ephesians, he declares that "Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word; that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy, and without blemish." ‖

All these, and many other passages, include sanctification in this world, and agree in representing salvation from wrath as the means of deliverance from sin. To deny this, as well as to affirm "that righteousness comes by the law," would be to say "that Christ is dead in vain."

It is only following out the same train of thought to remark further, that all the leading motives to Christian obedience are derived from the Gospel of the grace of God, though not to the exclusion of our obligations to him as our Creator, and Preserver, and the Author of all our temporal mercies. The love of God in giving his only-begotten Son for the redemption of a lost world; the love of Christ in giving himself a ransom for his guilty people; the enjoyment of the free gift of justification, and of all the blessings of the new covenant by those who believe; and the glorious prospect of life and immortality; —these are the powerful arguments which are chiefly urged upon redeemed sinners, to induce them to do the will of God. They are "besought by the mercies of God," "constrained by the love of Christ," and taught to consider themselves as "not their own, but bought with a price," and therefore bound by the most endearing of all ties to "glorify God in their body, and in their spirit, which are God's." §

Not only are believers often thus addressed in general terms; but particular duties are enforced in the same manner. Love to enemies is enjoined as an imitation of the love of God. Jesus commands his disciples to "love one another as he hath loved them," and this peculiar love is "for the truth's sake which dwelleth in them, and shall be with them for ever."

* 1 Pet. ii. 24. † Gal. i. 4. ‡ Tit. ii. 14.
‖ Eph. v. 25—27. § Rom. xii. 1. 2 Cor. v. 14, 15. 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20.

They exercise mutual forgiveness, "as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven them." Contributing to the necessity of the saints, flows from the knowledge of "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ; who though he was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich." "Husbands love their wives, as Christ also loved the church; and wives are subject to their own husbands, as the church is subject to Christ." It is unnecessary to enlarge further. The motives which have been mentioned are completely sufficient to sanctify the church; and though they be resisted by many who profess to know God, yet they will always regulate the temper and conduct of true believers, except when they fall under the power of temptation, and "depart from the living God by an evil heart of unbelief."

Where there is no principle of love and gratitude, there can be no acceptable service of the Most High. Men in their natural state rebel against his righteous government; "their carnal minds are enmity against God, for they are not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." * How, then, is this rebellious spirit to be overcome, and this enmity to be destroyed? By what means is love, supreme love to God, the constraining principle of all obedience, to take possession of those hearts where nothing but enmity now dwells? Not surely by any effort of the carnal mind, which may vary its course, but still retains its enmity, whether by avowed hostility or under the mask of friendship. This enmity cannot be reformed; it must be slain; and there is here "a new creation," the work of Him who said, "let there be light, and there was light." Grace, therefore, and grace alone, is the source and spring of all true holiness in the hearts and lives of redeemed sinners; and, with respect to them, this influence will continue till sin as well as death shall be finally and completely destroyed.

It is admitted, however, that a bad use may be made of the doctrine of Divine grace. The worst of all sinners are those who "sin that grace may abound;" and there is no crime which, under the influence of a principle so base and ungenerous, may not be perpetrated. This is the utmost extent to which the carnal mind can go; its hellish gratification is here complete. Those in whom this principle fully operates are observed, generally, to have their consciences more seared, to be more daring, and to proceed to greater lengths in committing all manner of iniquity, than the most ungodly men who never made any profession of religion. I admit this reproach, therefore, with all

* Rom. viii. 7.

its aggravations, provided it be allowed to rest merely on the guilty heads of those who justly deserve it.

To this objection it might be a sufficient reply to say, that the evil arises solely from the corrupt hearts of men, "who turn the grace of our God into lasciviousness," in direct opposition to its native influence, and to the most solemn remonstrances and awful warnings, often pressed upon their consciences in the Word of God. But further I ask, can it be thought that any person who despises the most dreadful threatenings of Divine wrath, and "runs upon the thick bosses of the Almighty's buckler," does really believe the holy Gospel, which slays the enmity of the stoutest and most rebellious heart? And if he be an unbeliever, as he most certainly is, what justice is there in attributing his iniquity to a doctrine which, in reality, he abhors, whatever speculations he may entertain respecting it?

The most melancholy part of the subject now presents itself; for candour and faithfulness oblige me to add, that the true disciples of Christ are in danger from a partial influence of the same ungodly principle. But neither does this furnish any just argument against the Divine inspiration, and the sanctifying influence of the Gospel; for it is "the doctrine which is according to godliness," whatever use they may make of it. Every thing good in their conduct arises from this source: and all evil flows from the remaining corruption of their own wicked hearts—a subject which is often dwelt upon in the Word of God, for their warning and admonition. The former is the work of God; the latter is exclusively their own.

For their sakes, as well as from a desire to reach conviction to false professors, I earnestly entreat all to consider that the reality and the genuine nature of faith in the heart cannot be proved in any way whatever, independently of its sanctifying influence. "Faith without works is dead;" * it is unproductive, and of no avail; or, in other words, it does not exist. The Apostle James demands of some vain talkers, whose tongues were loose and ungovernable, who spoke about religion, and boasted of their faith, "Show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works" †—implying a flat and peremptory denial that such persons were believers. He asks them, "Can a fig-tree bear olive-berries, either a vine figs?" ‡ agreeably to the doctrine of the Lord Jesus, who gives a decisive criterion by which false prophets and false professors may be detected. "Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so,

* James, ii. 20. † Ver. 18. ‡ Chap. iii. 12.

every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit." * This principle is inculcated in the parable of the sower; in the description of Christ as the true vine, from whom his people as the branches derive all their life and nourishment; in all the epistles to the churches, and throughout the whole of Divine revelation.

All serious professors of Christianity admit, that the faith of a disciple of Christ cannot otherwise be known to those around him, than by the good fruits which it produces. But some consider their consciousness of believing the Gospel, of enjoying its blessed hope, of love to Christ, a disposition to obey him, and other inward experiences of the power of the truth, as sufficient evidences of the sincerity of their profession, † and deny that any proof arises to their own minds from their external conduct; though it be very plain that if the latter be an evidence in its own nature, it must of necessity be such, both to the person whose conduct justifies his profession, and to those who have an opportunity of observing him. Others go so nicely to work as to distinguish between committing sin and doing good, acknowledging that, were they to live in the fulfilment of the lusts of the flesh, they would have no reason to judge favourably of their own state, but avowing that they pay no regard, in this view, to the positive fruits which the Gospel uniformly produces in the lives of all who believe it.

Some exclude this sort of evidence altogether, that they may ease their consciences in the commission of sin. These I do not call serious professors, whatever pretensions they may have to faith, and extatic joy, and fervent devotion. Others adopt nearly the same sentiments, as I charitably hope, from a fear of making their own works in any respect the foundation of their hope before God. Taking both into view, I shall endeavour to state the doctrine of the Scriptures on this very important article of Christian experience.

The Word of God doth not suppose that any man is a complete judge of the principles by which he is animated, without close attention to the effects resulting from those principles. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." No man, not even a sincere fearer of God, knoweth the extent of the deceitfulness and wickedness of his own heart. Of this

* Matt. vii. 15—20.

† These experiences of the power of the Gospel on the inner man, are certainly evidences of true faith. But the whole extent of my argument is, that they are such only in connexion with practical godliness. Where real and substantial fruit is not produced, all knowledge, and inward feelings, and dispositions, and enjoyments, are nugatory and delusive; if they exist at all, they are used for the purpose of self-deception.

the Scriptures furnish us with many deplorable instances. And with respect to those of another description, did not Judas, and Simon Magus, and Demas, and many others who made shipwreck of the faith, and even those who committed the unpardonable sin, at one period of their lives esteem themselves true believers? And how shall stony ground or thorny ground hearers be undeceived, if they be kept always poring upon their mental exercises, and be withheld from considering what fruits they are bringing forth? The joy of the former class is temporary. Those who belong to the latter class may go on, entertaining a high conceit of themselves, till they land in everlasting misery; and even the true children of God, deceived by this false principle, may stray from the fold of the good Shepherd, "leave their first love," cease from "doing their first works," and become "lukewarm, neither cold nor hot" *

That there is a difference between the knowledge and faith of those who are said to "believe for a while," or others who, with much apparent knowledge, make a creditable profession to the end of their lives, without really bringing forth fruit—and "those who, having heard the word, keep it in an honest and good heart, and bring forth fruit with patience" †—I am not at all disposed to deny. But I have not hitherto found, nor do I expect ever to find in the Word of God, after a search of more than forty years, any explanation of the difference which could enable a believer to judge of the state of his own mind, without reference to his life and conduct.

Believers are never treated in the Scriptures as persons who are beyond the reach of fear and caution, while in this imperfect state. Self-examination is enjoined as a habitual duty, and the most alarming considerations are often presented to their view. "Fear him who, after he hath killed the body, hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, fear him." ‡ "If ye call on the Father, who, without respect of persons, judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear." ‖ "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." § "Be not high-minded, but fear." ¶ Nay, Christians are often thus warned against falling into the grossest sins, and reminded of the awful consequences. "If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die." ** "Be not deceived: God is not mocked, for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption." †† "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived." ‡‡ And then follows

* Rev. ii. 4, 5. Chap. iii. 15, 16. † Luke viii. 15. ‡ Luke xii. 5.
‖ 1 Pet. i. 17. § 1 Cor. x. 12. ¶ Rom. xi. 20.
** Rom. viii. 13. †† Gal. vi. 7, 8. ‡‡ 1 Cor. vi. 9.

a list of the characters which shall be for ever excluded from the kingdom of God.

Such warnings and admonitions are frequent in the apostolic epistles, and in those addressed to the seven churches in Asia. They are designed to affect the hearts of believers, and indeed can ultimately be beneficial to them alone. Of necessity, therefore, we must admit that they are so intended, or deny that they answer any good purpose in the churches of Christ, to whom, unquestionably, they are addressed.

Those rousing motives are not inconsistent with the certainty of salvation to him that believeth, though they do not permit any man to think that he is a believer without just grounds. Nor are they in the least unfriendly to the doctrines of election, and the perseverance of the saints. On the contrary, those who disregard them have no reason to expect that they shall endure to the end and be saved; for they are God's appointed means for effectuating all the purposes of his grace. He wills that his people should be delivered from slavish fear, but not from cautious fear arising from a sense of danger, which acts in a way precisely similar to the principle of self-preservation with respect to natural life. Immediately on perceiving any cause of alarm, this principle or instinct is feelingly alive, and without waiting for the more tedious operation of reason, exerts itself for the preservation of the body. In like manner, instinctive fear is one of the qualities of every renewed soul, and spontaneously operates in the moment of danger, unless when the soul is disqualified for this exercise by spiritual diseases, such as self-confidence, apathy, or sloth.

Not only are believers often solemnly reminded in general terms, by our Lord and his Apostles, that all unsanctified persons are unbelievers, and that all who keep the commandments of Christ from love to his blessed name, are his disciples indeed; but they also strongly assert, that believers know their interest in Christ by the practical influence of the truth on their hearts and conduct; indeed, there is no other possible way of preventing self-deception in this greatest of all concerns.

The first epistle of John is "written to them that believe on the name of the Son of God, that they may know that they have eternal life; and that they may believe on the name of the Son of God.* The former object he accomplishes in the way which I have mentioned; and the whole of his doctrine corresponds exactly with this saying of Christ, "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you." † He says, "Hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He

* 1 John, v. 13. † John, xv. 14.

that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him." "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren: he that loveth not his brother abideth in death. My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed, and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him." *

Paul, also, the Apostle of the Gentiles, who gloried in the exceeding riches of Divine grace, and would not suffer this doctrine to be tarnished with a single particle of human worth, expresses his confidence in the Hebrews, because they were engaged in "the work of faith and labour of love, which God is not unrighteous to forget;" and then gives them this exhortation, "We desire that every one of you do show the same diligence, to the full assurance of hope unto the end: that ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises." † And Peter, the Apostle of the circumcision, who opened the door of faith both to Jews and Gentiles, exhorts those who "had obtained precious faith, to give diligence, to make their calling and election sure, by adding to their faith virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity;" and concludes thus, "for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." ‡

Every attempt to give another explanation of the above texts, which are so very clear and explicit, if it proceed not from ignorance, shows a desire to evade the plain meaning of the Scriptures. But it must be carefully observed that external conduct, should it even be carried so far as to "bestow all our goods to feed the poor, and to give our bodies to be burned," is not that alone which the Word of God proposes as a conclusive evidence of being in a state of salvation. And, therefore, principles as well as practice must be taken into the account; the highest attainments, and the most active services, are nothing without "charity," or love. ‖ All other Christian virtues must be "added to faith;" § and if our whole life, both with regard to comfort and holiness, be not "a life by the faith of the Son of God," we have no right to say with Paul that "He loved us, and gave himself for us." ¶

* 1 John, ii. 3—5. iii. 14, 18, 19.
† Heb. vi. 10—12.
‡ 2 Pet. i. 1, 5—11. ‖ 1 Cor. xiii. 1—3.
§ 2 Pet. i. 5.
¶ Gal. ii. 20.

This removes all objections on the score of self-righteousness. When a Christian "proves his own work, that he may have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another," * what does he prove, and wherein does he rejoice? It is not his object to establish a claim to the favour of God by any of his own works. His desire is to obtain scriptural evidence, that, under a deep conviction of his guilt and wretchedness, and of his total inability to do any thing towards his own deliverance, he has renounced all self-dependence; that his hope is founded, solely and exclusively, on the finished work of Christ; and that he deceives not himself when he says, "in the Lord have I righteousness and strength." † Nor does he rejoice on the supposition that he has discovered the comparative perfection of his own Christian character, as the means of supplying an apprehended deficiency in the Gospel, by itself alone, to give full relief to his guilty conscience. He rejoices that his natural opposition to free and sovereign mercy is removed; that his enmity against God is destroyed by an infinite display of the love of God in giving his only-begotten Son for the redemption of lost sinners; and that he has some Scriptural evidence of believing the truth which saves, by experiencing its power to engage him in the habitual practice of works flowing from love to God, to his Christian brethren, and to all men; while, in a stronger point of view than ever, he perceives the exceeding sinfulness of sin, the many evils which still cleave to him, and his continual need of forgiveness through the blood of atonement. He recollects and deeply considers the agonies which the Son of God endured, thus expressed by the poet:—

"Say, Faith, who bleeds on yonder tree?
Know'st thou that visage marr'd and torn?
My Lord! My God!—Ye angels, see
Your dread Creator crown'd with thorn!

"Step nearer;—view these ghastly wounds!
See how his yearning bowels move!
See how his breaking heart abounds
With streaming pledges of his love!"

And then, with increased conviction of guilt, but enjoying the assurance of hope, the believing sinner thus exclaims,

"Lord what am I, that I am loved,
Till wrath pour on thee all its storms!"

Believers are conscious of bringing forth the fruits of righteousness, while they have no dependence on these as the ground

* Gal. vi. 4. † Isaiah, xlv. 24.

of their hope; and their chief concern is, "that they may be found in Christ, not having their own righteousness, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith."* Each of them, according to his measure of faith, adopts the language of the Apostle Paul, as formerly noticed, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."† But the case of unbelievers is very far indeed from being parallel. They perceive not the manifestation which God hath given of his free mercy in Christ Jesus. If, therefore, they be alarmed, and feel the necessity of a better righteousness than they now possess, to procure them acceptance with God; what can they do, while "ignorant of God's righteousness, but go about to establish their own righteousness, not submitting themselves unto the righteousness of God?" that is, "the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ." This is one of the deeply rooted principles of the human heart, which cannot be eradicated except by the Gospel breaking in with Divine light and energy upon benighted souls.

In stating this marked distinction between believers and unbelievers, and the experience of the former with respect to their attainment of the assurance of hope by the means which God hath appointed, while they completely disavow every claim of merit, and uniformly live by free pardoning mercy, it will be noticed that those of them only are described who act in character, who walk by faith, and cleave to the Lord Jesus with purpose of heart. For believers may go astray, not only by following sinful practices, but by departing from the faith of Jesus; and indeed the latter is the cause of every other evil with which they can be charged. Many exhortations are given them "to abide in Christ, to hold fast the faith; to continue in the faith grounded and settled, and not to be moved away from the hope of the Gospel; to put on the shield of faith; to fight the good fight of faith; to hold fast the profession of their faith, without wavering; to build themselves up on their most holy faith," &c. Many among the Hebrews, in the churches of Galatia, in the church of Corinth, and in other places, were addressed as having been partially subverted from the faith, and in the utmost danger of final apostasy; and therefore, in the most solemn manner, and in the most rousing terms, they were called to repentance. It thus appears that no room is left for self-confidence and carnal security, or for indulging in sloth and listless inactivity. All the powers of the soul must

* Philip. iii. 9. † Gal. vi. 14.

be exerted in "keeping the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus;" and if we would overcome the roaring lion, the great enemy of our salvation, we must resist him steadfast in the faith. In fine, we are real Christians just in so far as we account the faith of the Gospel infinitely precious, regard it as the life of our souls, and treat with the utmost jealousy every sentiment or doctrine which tends to sully and debase it, or to spoil it of its Divine simplicity and glory.

Edinburgh, April 16, 1816.

LETTER VI.

In a former Letter I endeavoured to evince, by a variety of arguments, the sanctifying nature of the doctrine of grace, or free salvation through the blood of Jesus, and to show from the Scriptures that the reality of a man's faith cannot be proved, otherwise than by its producing those good fruits which are ascribed to faith in the Word of God. Some hints have likewise been given with respect to the practical influence of the Gospel on the whole temper and conduct of those who believe it. But a particular statement of Christian duties cannot be attempted; nor is it my design at present to delineate the peculiar laws of the kingdom of heaven, some of which are misunderstood and neglected by many who in other respects adorn the Christian profession. To them I shall only say, regarding this part of their subjection to Christ, that it is their bounden duty to "become followers of the churches of God which in Judea were in Christ Jesus." *

What I now intend is, to remind my fellow Christians of the influence which the Gospel, when believed, must have on the ordinary transactions of life, confining myself to one branch of duty as a sample of the whole, and descending to minute particulars, because general hints often pass unregarded. When we hear the doctrine which is according to godliness, and the outlines of its purifying influence, described in general terms, we may be apt to ward off conviction, by thinking chiefly of those duties with the neglect of which we are not chargeable in a high degree, and of those sins of which we may be comparatively free. But when the sins of which we are verily guilty are specified, and justly exposed in their true colours, the charge is brought home, and our consciences verify our evil deeds.

* 1 Thess. ii. 14.

The duty which I have in view, is that of labouring six days in the week. I say the duty; for some appear to consider this rather as a thing which they may do if so inclined, than as an express commandment of the God of heaven; and to be jealous of this labour, not merely in its excess, or its guilty motives, but in its very nature as not being congenial to the exercises of a spiritual mind. This sentiment again I call pharisaical, though many pious and devout persons have less or more been infected by it.

I regard the ancient law of working six days, as applicable to believers of the Gospel in all ranks and conditions of life; servants of every description, as well as masters; Christian wives and mothers, as well as husbands and fathers; and even those who, being wealthy, have no occasion to labour for their daily bread. A Christian who is capable of engaging in active scenes, or sedentary employment, is not on any account warranted to be an idle and useless member of a church of Christ, or of society.

That diligence in business is a most essential Christian duty, appears from its being very often enjoined in the Word of God. There are many instructions and admonitions to this effect in the Book of Proverbs, where industry is applauded, and its beneficial consequences are pointed out; where idleness and sloth are most severely stigmatized, and their ruinous effects described. The sluggard is represented in a despicable point of view, as a useless being, incapable of doing good to himself, or to any other person. On this account the wise man places him in a degraded state, below the meanest of the animal creation, and sends him to learn wisdom from the ant.

In the New Testament, Christians are frequently addressed on this subject; and in one instance, in the most rousing and animating terms. The Thessalonians, mistaking the doctrine of Paul, supposed that the Lord Jesus was immediately to be revealed from heaven. Some of them declined working, at first solely from a religious principle, while they eagerly looked out for the coming of their Lord. If nothing worse had occurred, and no censure had been passed upon them, we might have been led to think that they were truly spiritual men, and more devoted to God than the church in general was. But what ensued? "They walked among their brethren disorderly, working not at all, but were busy bodies." The Apostle frequently repeats the epithet disorderly, "commanding them and exhorting them by our Lord Jesus Christ to be quiet, to cease from their tattling, to work at their lawful callings, and to eat their own bread." Nay, in extreme cases, he would have this evil cured by making them feel the effects of their indolence; for

he also commanded with apparent severity, but with real compassion and mercy, "that if any would not work, neither should he eat."

Not only did he thus admonish the offenders; but "he commanded the church, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to withdraw from every brother who (in respect of idleness and its pernicious effects) walked disorderly; to note that man, and have no company with him, that he might be ashamed"—that is, to keep up no idle conversation with him, but to oblige him to work, by making him feel that if he would talk unseasonably, though it should be about religion, his most respected friends would give him no countenance. This seems evidently to have been the Apostle's object, and not immediate exclusion from Christian fellowship; for he adds, "yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother." It appears however, throughout the whole of this impressive admonition, that he was extremely anxious to remedy so great an evil, and that he considered peaceable and industrious labour as a material part of the allegiance which the disciples of Christ owe to their Lord and Master.

The necessity and importance of this duty, further appear from the high examples proposed for our imitation. The Thessalonians were urged to it by the example of the Apostle Paul. Though "he had power to refrain from working, and might have been burdensome as an Apostle of Christ, yet he wrought with labour and travail night and day, for the purpose of making himself an example to them to follow him."* And he gave the same example to the elders of the church at Ephesus, urging them in strong and moving terms to imitate his conduct.† Would he have done this, if he had not considered working with their own hands as highly beneficial to those who are so employed, and ornamental to the Christian profession?

Another example, to which sufficient attention has not been paid, cannot be mentioned without the deepest reverence. Its absolute perfection can admit of no doubt, because it is the example of the great Lawgiver himself. The reason which is assigned for the original sanctification of the Sabbath-day, and for enjoining upon man the keeping of that day, is, because God rested from the work of creation on the seventh day. And, which is exactly parallel to this, the reason why man is commanded "to labour six days, and to do all his work," is, because "in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is." Indeed, it seems to me highly probable that there was no other reason why six days were employed in the

* 2 Thess. iii. 6—15. † Acts xx. 33—35.

work of creation; for we know that "he who stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth," could have brought into existence, and set in order, all his stupendous works in the twinkling of an eye. At any rate, He himself hath declared that one reason for it was to show to his creature man what respective proportion of his time he must employ in common labour, and in the immediate service of his great Creator. *

Ought not this fully to reconcile every Christian to the Divine commandment, which obliges us to labour six days, and to rest with God in the contemplation of his works one day in seven? The seventh day Sabbath, indeed, though part of God's moral law, was also a token of his covenant with the seed of Abraham, who "entered into his rest" in the land of promise. † In this respect it was typical and temporary, and has been set aside. ‡ Its moral obligation, however, cannot cease; and the first day of the week is the Christian Sabbath, on a ground precisely similar—because on that day which the Lord hath made, Jesus rose from the dead, ceased from his works, and entered into his rest, as on the seventh day God rested from the work of creation. ‖ The name, too, which is given to the Christian day of rest—"the Lord's day" §—is similar to the former name—"the Sabbath of the Lord thy God," or the Lord's Sabbath. In either case, therefore, a day devoted to the peculiar service of God is evidently intended.

This digression, I trust, will be pardoned, the subject being important, and having come so naturally in my way. It is not, indeed, an entire deviation from the point in hand; for the two distinct parts of the fourth commandment serve to illustrate and confirm each other. They who admit the moral obligation of the one, cannot with any consistency deny that of the other.

Every duty has its appropriate motives, and in the present case these are clearly specified in the Word of God.

The leading motive, and that which ought to regulate all our schemes and all our labour, is, "that we may walk honestly toward them who are without." ¶ And in another passage, this is contrasted with theft; "Let him that stole steal no more; but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good." ** If a Christian, therefore, be negligent in his work, or if he labour, perhaps even to excess, without having constantly in view the principle of justice, and thereby render himself incapable of paying his lawful debts, he is a breaker of

* Gen. ii. 1—3. Exod. xx. 8—11. † Exod. xxxi. 13—15.
‡ Col. ii. 16, 17. ‖ Heb. iv. 3—11, particularly ver. 10.
§ Rev. i. 10. ¶ 1 Thess. iv. 12. ** Eph. iv. 28.

the eighth commandment; and this is the more to be regretted, because "to do justly" is the first lesson in that branch of practical Christianity which regards the second table of the law. "To do no ill to our neighbour," though often and strictly enjoined upon us, is the lowest effort of love; and what Christian virtue can we suppose a professor of religion to possess, if he be deficient in common honesty?

In one of the above quotations, honesty is enjoined "toward them that are without," because the opposite practice occasions the name of God and his doctrine to be blasphemed by unbelievers, who are quicksighted to perceive the bad conduct of serious professors; and this is a heart-rending thought to those who are alive to the connexion between "having our conversation honest among the Gentiles, and their seeing our good works, and glorifying God in the day of visitation. * But this gives no warrant for using more freedom in such matters with Christian brethren. To use such unwarrantable freedom is an aggravation of the crime, and an abuse of the disinterested friendship and unsuspecting confidence which ought to subsist among Christians. The injustice practised by some among the Corinthians, is thus reproved, "Ye do wrong and defraud, and that your brethren." †

Another motive is, "That we may have lack of nothing; that we may not eat any man's bread for nought; that each may eat his own bread." ‡ Thus doth the Apostle inculcate a lawful and praiseworthy spirit of independence, quite in unison with all the principles of the Gospel, and all the generous feelings of the heart. This independent spirit, though apparently similar in its effects, has yet in itself no affinity with miserable selfishness, or ostentatious vanity and pride.

This is a powerful motive, and so enwarped with dutiful self-love, that one should think it could scarcely fail to operate on all the disciples of Christ. Yet there were melancholy instances of its having lost its influence on the minds of some in the Church at Thessalonica; and that due warning might be given in other places, and throughout the world in all ages, the Apostle thus writes to Timothy, "If any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." ‖ The context does not prohibit the use which I now make of this quotation; for the pious domestic work of supporting aged near relations, which is there enjoined, is not placed in the light of mere bounty: it is a requital of benefactors who are now reduced to want, and who form part

* 1 Pet. ii. 12. † 1 Cor. vi. 8.
‡ 1 Thess. iv. 12. 2 Thess. iii. 8—12. ‖ 1 Tim. v. 8.

of a believer's "own house," whether living under his roof or elsewhere. Their claim is the same in kind as that of his children and other dependents; and if he use not lawful means, according to his ability, to provide for all these, or if he withhold support from a principle of covetousness, you see where he places himself. How admirably is the Word of God adapted to reach every spring and motive of the human heart! And how inveterate must be that corruption which often prompts it to resist not only the mercies, but also the terrors of the Lord! —which renders a man deaf to the loudest and most urgent calls of nature, that he may indulge his favourite lusts!

Those who are apt to be misled by a false religious principle, are entreated to observe, that whatever may be the extent of their knowledge and Christian experience, they cannot consistently profess to trust in God for all needful blessings, nor to depend upon him for daily bread, though that is also promised, if they use not the means which he hath appointed; for there are no promises to the indolent and slothful. On the contrary, "He becometh poor that dealeth with a slack hand; an idle soul shall suffer hunger, and drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags;" while "the hand of the diligent maketh rich." When a person expects any other fruit of his industry or of his idleness, because he thinks himself too religious to be actively engaged in daily labour, he is misled by a principle of rank enthusiasm, which in this instance is equally opposite to sound reason, and to the revealed will of God.

In the apostolic exhortations a third motive is urged upon us, —"That we may have to give to him that needeth." * Our object therefore in pursuing our worldly callings, is not merely to provide for ourselves, and our relatives, and other dependents, which would be criminal self-love; but to supply the wants of the poor, "to do good to all men as we have opportunity, especially to them who are of the household of faith." † Here is a wide field for exertion. This duty is much insisted on in the Word of God, and without it there is no true Christianity; for "pure religion, and undefiled, before God and the Father, is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." ‡ It is that by which the sheep of Christ will be distinguished at the last day; and there is a present blessedness in performing this self-denied labour of love, agreeably to the gracious saying of the Lord Jesus, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." ‖

* Eph. iv. 28.
† Gal. vi. 10.
‡ James i. 27.
‖ Acts xx. 35.

But in order to all this, we must "labour, working with our hands the thing which is good."

Let it be carefully observed, that unless the strictest attention be paid to the object pressed upon us in the first motive, the other two objects are unattainable by any lawful means. A person indeed may provide for his family, and give to the poor, while he is not possessed of sufficient funds to pay his just debts. But what is he doing? He is living upon other people, and not eating his own bread; nor can he in those circumstances perform any legitimate act of beneficence, for all his apparent bounty must be at the expense of his creditors.

The motives which have been mentioned, seem to be the whole of those which are set before Christians in the New Testament in order to stimulate their industry, except a general one which applies to every part of their conduct, namely, "serving the Lord;" and it is a great satisfaction to know, that we may glorify him in all the common actions of life. When professing Christians are diligent in their worldly callings, with a set purpose "to walk honestly, to have lack of nothing, to have to give to him that needeth, and to do all to the glory of God," they are in the line of duty; they do every thing which, with respect to industry, the law of Christ enjoins, and may expect the blessing of "him who feeds the ravens, and clothes the grass of the field," while they depend on his providential care, and regard the admonition of Christ, "seek ye *first* the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."* But let them beware of other motives, lest they should become worldly-minded, and fall under the dominion of covetousness, ambition, and pride.

It deeply concerns every one who would have a conscience void of offence in this matter, to know by what means he may so conduct his worldly affairs as to make sure of "walking honestly."

One essential requisite is steady and persevering industry, as appears from the former part of this Letter. And I now only request your further attention to another apostolic exhortation, which is thus expressed, "Not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord."† Where business of an important nature, which requires a combination of wisdom, prudence, caution, activity, and prompt decision, is conducted in a drawling and lifeless manner, success is hardly to be expected. Fervency of spirit, therefore, in opposition to the apathy of the sluggard, is absolutely necessary; and when this proceeds from the motives of the Gospel, it is accounted "serving the

* Matt. vi. 33. † Rom. xii. 11.

Lord." Thus believers, in the relative condition of servants, are commanded to do their work "heartily, as unto the Lord." * The expressions are similar. That which is done "heartily," is done with "fervency of spirit;" and doing the work in which we are engaged "to the Lord," is of the same import with "serving the Lord." The reason, too, why fervency of spirit is required in both cases, is because all the persons in their respective callings "serve the Lord Christ," who cannot be served at all, except with cheerfulness, alacrity, and fervour. All the three injunctions, therefore, in the text referred to, are applicable to the right management of our temporal concerns, and the diligence and activity which this requires; though certainly they do also apply to every spiritual service in which we can be engaged.

Due attention to frugality is likewise indispensable; for without this the greatest industry will often prove abortive. An unsuitable degree of expenditure, going on regularly, or perhaps progressively, from year to year, with a fluctuating income liable to all the reverses of trade, will sooner or later make fatal inroads on a moderate stock, and derange the affairs of its proprietor. Wastefulness is criminal in every case; for Jesus, after feeding thousands by a miracle, commanded his disciples to "gather up the fragments which remained, that nothing might be lost." † But in some cases there is a necessity for the most minute attention to the smallest things; and when this proceeds from a determined resolution "to do justly," and not from covetousness, it indicates a truly Christian spirit.

The real expenditure of persons in trade ought always to be considerably less than their apparent gain, otherwise their lawful debts never will be paid. And in order to this there must be self-denial, watchfulness against being led by fashion and imitation, and a firm though gentle resistance to the unsuitable and importunate demands of their children, which indeed is a part of this duty, if they would "bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

Another very necessary precaution is to beware of plunging into debt. Many Christians who have limited and known incomes, would do well to follow this precept literally, "Owe no man any thing but love." If they want some article which is not an absolute necessary of life, and such things are most frequently the cause of this evil, let them wait till they have money to purchase it, and in the mean time "be content with such things as they have." If those of them who have com-

* Eph. vi. 5—7. † John vi. 12.

fortable subsistence according to their line of life, would pay every article as they get it, and always when it is possible have some reversion, till it be equal to the amount of six or twelve months' wages, they would not be involved, and their situation would be far more honourable and happy than it often is. When once they begin to pay last week's provisions with the wages of the next, there is no saying in what difficulties they may ultimately land themselves by this imprudent conduct. It is criminal to be drowned in debt; and it is not virtuous and praiseworthy to be unnecessarily from hand to mouth, as we familiarly express it.

I have known persons who, with very slender means of subsistence, brought up large families in the most creditable manner, and who, with respect to the happy use of all needful things, were as rich as princes. They had no lack; there was fulness and hospitality in their neat, well-ordered, and cleanly houses; they had always something to spare for the relief of the distressed, pitying even those who, by neglecting their wise and frugal management, had reduced themselves to poverty; and they could not fail to walk honestly, for they suffered no man to have a claim against them. Reference is here made to times which are past, not because there are no present instances, though indeed these are always rare, but because less restraint is felt in praising the dead than the living.

Others who are engaged in trade, are in general under a necessity of being in debt. But justice requires that, at the very utmost, this should go no further than they have present ability to pay; and that they should be punctual in discharging their debts, for surely we owe a man something more than love, if he have a just demand upon us, which, for months or years after it is due, we neglect to pay. A trader ought particularly to have no old family accounts unsettled, and no promises to any of his creditors unfulfilled. Those, again, who are in affluent or easy circumstances, and not dependent on manufactures or commerce, are without excuse if their tradesmen's accounts be not punctually discharged. This is a great injury; it cripples the exertions of the most active and industrious men, whose prosperity depends on the honourable fulfilment of their own engagements.

As bad, or perhaps worse than any thing which has yet been mentioned, are all ambitious schemes of trade. I beseech those who fear God, as they value their own temporal and spiritual happiness, to avoid these, or to get out of them as fast as possible, escaping as a bird out of the snare of the fowler. They prove the ruin of multitudes, and are totally opposite to many Divine precepts, and to the whole spirit of Christianity. "They

that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil; which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." Such are the awful consequences which the Apostle ascribes to their not being "content with food and raiment." *

There are various degrees of the evil which is here described in its utmost extent, and in all its horrors. It is most fully verified in those whose love of money and boundless ambition prompt them to engage in schemes of trade so hazardous, and so extensive, that their object seems to be that of "gaining the whole world." But the same principle has its influence on all ranks, from the highest and most adventurous merchant or speculator, down to the lowest mechanic. And it appears to me, that no other effectual remedy can be prescribed than contentment with our lot, whatever that may be; supposing always that "we have food and raiment," without which we are not required to be content. The same precept, in opposition also to covetousness, is given in these words, "Be content with such things as ye have;" † and it is a truth revealed in the Scriptures, and confirmed by experience, that no change of circumstances can remove discontent. It often grows with prosperity; one object gained, another immediately presents itself; the desires of the corrupt heart expand; and this painful thirst cannot be allayed by the greatest possible enjoyment of worldly things; for "he that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase." ‡

From this, however, it does not follow that believers of the Gospel are prohibited from attempting in any way to better their circumstances. If there be an opening in providence for a servant becoming a master, or one already in trade safely extending his business on such a foundation as will form a security against injuring his creditors, or another in being more advantageously placed by an entire change, let each accept with thankfulness that which God liberally bestows. But if the person seem to go before providence, carving his own lot; if there be no rational prospect of success in the hazardous scheme which he has formed, nor any fitness on his part to render this probable; if his plan of advancement far exceed his means; if it necessarily involve in it a sporting with other people's money to a great extent, and a perpetual straining to keep up an immense load of factitious credit by dishonourable means —then it appears that he is impelled to it by discontent, or

* 1 Tim. vi. 8—10. † Heb. xiii. 5. ‡ Eccles. v. 10.

covetousness, or ambition; and if he should succeed, which does not generally happen, he will still be chargeable with the indulgence of one or other, if not the whole, of those lusts. Such a person loses sight of the legitimate objects of lawful industry. When he becomes deeply involved, or "falls into temptation and a snare," and still goes on without remorse, honesty and good faith are not to be expected from him. He turns that which is in itself a blessing, and a sacred duty, into an instrument of rebellion against God; and if sovereign grace prevent not, he will "drown himself in destruction and perdition."

To enable a conscientious person to walk honestly, nothing is more essential than that he should "guide his affairs with discretion." This is a leading part of the description of "a good man who feareth the Lord, and delighteth greatly in his commandments." In all respects his character, as described in Psalm cxii., is suitable and consistent. "He is upright; he is gracious, and full of compassion, and righteous; he showeth favour, and lendeth; he hath dispersed abroad, he hath given to the poor; his righteousness endureth for ever." Yet, while no man can justly accuse him of falsifying his promise, or of procrastinating the discharge of any lawful claim; while he distributes of his substance to the poor with a liberal and unsparing hand, "showing favour also, and lending;"—amidst all this profusion, which many will consider as the high-road to poverty, "wealth and riches are in his house." By the blessing of God, "he scattereth and yet increaseth, while another withholdeth more than is meet, and it tendeth to poverty." He trusts in the Lord, and casts all his care upon him. But observe, he gives evidence of this, without which all his professions would be vain; for his own exertions to render himself capable of such munificence are not wanting—"He guides his affairs with discretion." So indispensable, indeed, is this qualification, that he must excel in the benevolent parts of his character, and also in his righteousness and integrity, just in proportion as he excels in this.

Some may think this a singular description, and consider it as applicable only to a few eminently distinguished individuals; as if it were our duty rather to admire than to imitate. This is a great mistake. It means to represent the spirit and conduct of those in general who fear God, to every one of whom, if it do not, it certainly ought to apply, according to their various means and opportunities.

Order, if we understand by it not mere form, which may be carried to a ridiculous and hurtful extreme, but a regular and

uniform plan for the discreet management of our affairs, is essential to our ease and comfort, and to the performance of moral duty. It has a respect to every thing which concerns our persons, our families, and our lawful callings. With regard to the latter, which alone is my present object, as many things have been already stated which bear upon this point, I shall add only a few more particulars, relative to that prudential conduct which will enable Christians to act fully up to their character as honest men.

It is no uncommon thing to see persons in trade going on without any fixed and regular plan, wading in the midst of confusion, doing every thing at random, and spending a great part of their time in endeavouring to rectify blunders committed for want of thought. They know not the amount of their personal and family expenditure; whether it be less or more than all their free profit; nor what is the state of their funds. Nay, in some cases it is doubtful, and they are not at the pains to examine, whether upon the whole their trade be a losing or a gaining one. At the final issue of such concerns, it is generally pleaded by the bankrupt that he considered himself, till very lately, as possessed of funds more than sufficient to pay all his debt, though it then appears likely, if not absolutely certain, that he had been for several years in a state of insolvency. And this ignorance which, if it be real, shows a most regardless disposition with respect to the law of justice, and has too often been sustained as an extenuation of the crime when it became a subject of Christian dealing, though the insolvent person should not have met with any material recent losses, nor be able to pay little more than one-fourth of his lawful debts. Every proper allowance ought to be made for human imperfection. But this must stop somewhere; and surely there is a rule by which we can judge whether a person's conduct has upon the whole been regulated by the principles of justice.

Many other evils arising from confusion and disorder might be exposed, but the task is painful and ungracious. I shall mention two or three particulars. In cases where no rational plan is steadily followed, great loss is often sustained by selling goods on credit, and neglecting to place them to the accounts of the purchasers. This could rarely happen, if, as a part of a general plan, there were a determined resolution to make such entries at the very moment, in preference to any other business which might then solicit their attention.

Two things appear to me indispensable on the part of every honest trader, which, with due attention to the subjects handled

in the preceding part of this Letter, would lead Christians to exemplify every thing which is just and honourable in the management of their temporal concerns.

One of them is that of keeping regular books, containing a fair and complete statement of all transactions on both sides, that is, every account due by the trader, as well as every account for articles which he has sold on credit; also a cash-book, or some other method of distinctly recording all his receipts and disbursements, balanced daily, or at farthest weekly. This has the double advantage of showing whether any cash transaction has been omitted, and what is the amount of his money sales and family expenses. If it be objected that some are incapable of performing this task, I answer, that formal and elegant book-keeping is not required; and if any person cannot accurately, though in a simple and awkward manner, do all which is here most earnestly recommended, he ought not to be the conductor of any business.

The other indispensable requisite is, that every one who is engaged in trade should make out, and record in a book kept for the purpose, a correct annual state of his affairs. This requires an inventory, at or below cost prices, of his goods and utensils, to which is to be added the sum total of the accounts due to him by his customers, after writing off every bad debt, and any other property of which he may be possessed, except household furniture, which is no fund for the payment of debt; fixing a price on every article rather below than above its wholesale value. The other side consists of the whole amount of debts due by him for goods and for borrowed money, as well as every other engagement for which he will ultimately become liable. The balance of these two is the amount of his free stock, or of his deficiency. This regulation may be still more easily followed than that which requires perpetual attention every lawful day. But if the incapacity of some of those concerned be insisted on in either case, what should hinder them from taking assistance? This will be far less expensive than insolvency.

In no instance where these two precautions are adopted from a determined resolution to act justly, will there be any danger of a Christian materially injuring his creditors. His anxiety to owe no man any thing but love, proved by his jealous attention to the state of his affairs, will prevent him from over-rating his stock in trade, or forming sanguine hopes of future prosperity without any rational ground. He will know how he stands, and timeously perceive the approaching evil, if it must come. This will induce him to stop while he is possessed of means sufficient, or nearly sufficient, to pay all his

debts. At least, if he should err in some degree, he certainly will not go on till there be a shameful deficiency, of which he can give no satisfactory account.

Nothing can be farther from my intention than to censure those who have been reduced to a state of insolvency by losses in trade, or other misfortunes, within a short period of their resolution to make a final settlement. The affairs of the most active, prudent, and conscientious traders, may be deranged by providential occurrences over which they have no control. This situation is one of the most painful and distressing to an honest mind; and such persons are objects of tender sympathy, but not of blame. They have not in the smallest degree forfeited their claim to the confidence and support of their friends, nor have they done any thing that is dishonourable to the Christian profession. Neither is it inconsistent with the strictest principles of justice, that a trader, after meeting with heavy losses, and being conscious that his funds are not adequate to the payment of his debts, should attempt to make up the deficiency by carrying on business with renewed vigour, if it be clearly ascertained that it yields considerably more than is sufficient to cover all its own expenses, and those of his family. Dishonesty begins at that point where there is already a shortcoming, and the defaulter goes on without having good reason to expect any thing but increasing deficiency. When such is the real state of the case, it does not appear to me that he ought to be excused because he has deceived himself with an exaggerated and flattering opinion of the extent of his funds, and has strengthened his opinion by fallacious written statements.

But the evil which most generally prevails is that of going on without a plan, and with a resolution to avoid attentive scrutiny. When professing Christians neglect every precaution; when they continue for a long period willingly ignorant of the state of their affairs, and thus render themselves almost totally incapable of paying their just debts; although, at any time during several years, some of them could have put together, in the space of one hour, as many of the sums due to their principal creditors as would have proved them irretrievably bankrupt;—how does it appear that "in all things they are willing to live honestly?" Perhaps they cannot be charged with any particular transactions which the world would call fraudulent. They do not "make the ephah small, and the shekel great," nor do they falsify the balances by deceit, nor keep a "bag of deceitful weights." But in the view we are now considering, their whole conduct is one undeviating course of injustice. And very often, too, this is connected with a train of falsehood, palliated with untenable excuses, and so habitual and familiar,

that they become hardened under it. Many promises are made to parry off urgent demands, when the debtor knows that he cannot fulfil them. These, of course, are broken; and this often happens when no apology is offered to those with whom he deals unfaithfully. At last he becomes so notorious that no person who knows him will place any confidence in his word, at least with respect to the payment of his debt! The whole procedure bears evident marks of injustice and falsehood; and it is evident they who lead such a life are not walking in the fear of God.

The same industry, enforced by all its Scriptural motives, and the same precautions which have been urged for the purpose of preventing future insolvency, are equally incumbent on those who continue in business after having been unhappily placed in that situation, whether in consequence of adverse providences, or of personal blame; and especially in the latter case. Nay, a strong obligation is thus laid upon them to redouble their diligence. A just man never reckons his debt discharged until it be really paid, though no person may have a legal claim against him. After all his honest and persevering exertions, he may not be able to pay the whole. But if he can accomplish it by his utmost endeavours, he will show his ardent inclination to do justice by discharging a part of his former debt, taking special care that he do not thereby injure his present creditors; and however small this dividend may be, it will give a convincing evidence of what he is disposed to do.

Finally, it is necessary to remark, that there is a dangerous and hurtful extreme in prosecuting any worldly calling, however lawful, with so much avidity and anxious care, as indicates want of sufficient attention to the salutary admonitions of the Lord Jesus Christ. "Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth to everlasting life." * "Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on." † These warnings are illustrated and enforced by the reproof which Jesus gave to Martha, one of his true disciples, when she was engaged in the most laudable service, that of preparing an entertainment for her blessed Lord. In order to check her excessive care about any thing pertaining to the concerns of this life, and to show the infinite superiority of that which occupied the whole attention of Mary while she "sat at the feet of Jesus, and heard his word," he thus addressed her, "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many

* John, vi. 27. † Luke, xii. 22.

things; but one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her." *

To give a decided preference, therefore, to that enduring food which feeds the soul, that good and never-failing portion which Jesus gives; and habitually to show this determined preference by rising above the hopes and fears of this mortal life, and "casting all our care upon God," is essential to the character of every one who in truth and sincerity calls Jesus Lord.

The strong plea which has been urged in favour of industry is not, I trust, inconsistent with "being careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, making our requests known unto God." † On the contrary, to be diligent in business from those legitimate motives which have been stated, and not from ambitious or sordid views, nor from a desire of "laying up treasures upon earth," seems to be the best method of preventing sinful and distracting care; for the direct tendency of those guilty motives is to overwhelm the soul with distrustful anxiety about present things, and the same evil results from the want of dutiful industry. In either of these cases, the nature of the burden which we bring upon ourselves is such, that we are not permitted to "cast it upon the Lord." We have no ground to expect Divine support till we confess and forsake those evils which bring us into a state of sinful care. So long as we continue in that unhallowed way, we must be deprived of the great consolation arising from such a text as this, "Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass; ‡ for it would be impious to suppose that we are invited to commit any sinful way to God, to trust in him respecting it, or to indulge a hope that "he will bring it to pass."

Therefore, when we are engaged in the most innocent and lawful pursuits, we ought never to forget that this world is one of our greatest enemies, and that our souls may be ruined by setting too high a value on its best enjoyments. We need perpetually to watch, and pray, and strive against it in all its threatening and enticing forms, and to preserve upon our spirits a deep conviction that we can "overcome the world only by the faith of the Son of God." ‖

"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter; Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole (duty) of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil." §

EDINBURGH, MAY 1, 1816.

* Luke x. 39—42. † Phil. iv. 6. ‡ Psalm xxxvii. 5.
‖ 1 John v. 4, 5. § Eccles. xii. 13, 14.

THE SCRIPTURAL RULE

OF

FORBEARANCE IN CHURCHES,

BEING A REPLY TO A PAMPHLET ENTITLED

"OBSERVATIONS ON FORBEARANCE IN CHURCHES."

NOW FIRST PUBLISHED FROM THE AUTHOR'S MANUSCRIPT.

INTRODUCTION.

The principal thing attempted in the following pages, is to show the nature and extent of true Christian forbearance, and that it forms no excuse for churches permitting their members to disobey the laws of Christ.

With deep regret, the Author perceives the injury which Divine truth may sustain by the publication of loose principles under the specious name of forbearance, combined with a strong, but inconsistent plea in favour of unity.

It is, therefore, with the view of pointing out the evil of such principles, and of placing the subject of forbearance in its Scriptural light, which have induced him at present to enter on this discussion.

SCRIPTURAL RULE OF FORBEARANCE, &c.

The obligation which lies upon all the followers of Christ to be of one mind, as it relates to the doctrine of his word and the practices it enjoins, as well as to mutual love and affection, is most important. Many, however, have considered unity as an evil, and represented those who plead for it as infringing on the liberty of Christians, and attempting that which is totally impracticable in this imperfect state. Some who have imperfect views on this subject, consider unity as attainable in churches, but look upon it as a thing which is yet future; and express a confident hope that the time will come when the multitude of them that believe will be of one heart and of one soul, as were those who composed the church at Jerusalem.

So far they and I are of one mind, though we may not in all respects pursue the same means for promoting unity.

Indeed, nothing in the spirit and conduct of those who seem to understand the truth, and in many other particulars to be instructed in the things concerning the kingdom of God, is more astonishing than their aversion to this doctrine. Whatever may be the extent of their forbearance on other points, they cannot patiently hear any thing favourable to this; they even revile and slander those who plead for "brethren dwelling together in unity." Do they not know that God anciently promised to give his people "one heart and one way;" that Jesus earnestly and repeatedly prayed, "that all his disciples might be one;" that his prayer began to be answered when the church at Jerusalem was "of one heart and of one soul;" and that his Apostles, partaking of his spirit, besought the churches in his name "to speak the same thing, and to be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment?"

Are the opposers of this not aware that the law of Christ,

by which they profess to be regulated, is a perfect and infallible system of truth and duty; that all who have obtained mercy, are laid under the deepest obligations to revere and to obey every iota of it; that every deviation in heart or life is a sin against God; and that, consequently, all differences among Christians relative to Divine commandments, are, on one side or other, not only imperfections, but really criminal in their nature, as being opposite to God's holy law?

To argue against unity, is to argue against universal subjection to the will of God. We never can be of one mind till we be "holy in all manner of conversation," and in our measure "holy, as God is holy." Is this a thing to be depreciated? Will any one who fears God venture to affirm that it is not our duty to press after universal holiness, or to say that we err against the law of forbearance, or any law which God hath given, when we urge this upon the consciences of our brethren, and are willing on our part to suffer the word of exhortation? Let such, then, beware of condemning those who desire Christian unity; for it is neither less nor more, than desiring that the churches "may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God."

Amidst the extensive knowledge of Divine truth lately acquired by many Christian professors, there seems no revival of the spirit of unity which was exemplified in the primitive churches. Instead of one church, comprehending all the believers who dwelt in a city or district, there are now many parties, each of them torn with disputes and quarrels, thus augmenting daily the number of separate classes, and threatening the very existence of every congregation which has any resemblance of the apostolic churches.

Having no intention to widen differences, or to overlook commendable things, while I wish, in all humility of mind, to give a solemn caution against "that instruction which causeth to err from the words of knowledge," I shall first notice two or three other things in which we are agreed.

That there is no inconsistency whatever between unity and forbearance, I am fully persuaded. To convince us of this, nothing more ought to be necessary than merely to reflect that both duties are commanded in the Word of God, which never enjoins upon us opposite things, or things in their own nature impossible. All that I request therefore is, that unity shall not be so stated, or pursued in such a way, as to prevent the full exercise of true Christian forbearance; and that forbearance shall not be exercised so as necessarily to exclude or mar Christian unity.

I am farther completely satisfied, though in this we have some-

times practically failed, that in our present imperfect state, forbearance not only does not prevent unity, but tends to promote it. If we would "endeavour to keep the unity of the spirit," we must do this "in the bond of peace," and in the exercise of all lowliness and meekness, with "long-suffering, forbearing one another in love."

It is affirmed by some, that the law of forbearance, as well as all the other commandments of Christ which regulate the faith and practice of Christians, are plain and simple. To this also I agree, though perhaps on principles somewhat different from those to whom I refer.

The resolution which many have adopted, seems to be, that of forbearing every thing which appears to them exceptionable in the principles and practice of those who in other respects, according to their judgment, give evidence of their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and of their love to all the saints; the object being to collect into one society the true children of God from among all the various and contending parties of professing Christians, without convincing them of any error, or requiring any change of conduct—Independents of various descriptions, Presbyterians, Moravians, Methodists, Episcopalians, and Roman Catholics—all of them unbaptised; although they certainly cannot be very bigoted if they join such a church, yet each of them maintaining, less or more, the peculiarities of his own sect, and doing as he pleases, provided they conform to the leading parts of its form of worship, which after all, I suppose, is not included amongst forbearable things.

As a necessary consequence of a church being formed of such discordant materials, they are willing to forbear every thing except doctrines subversive of the Gospel, immoral conduct, and personal offences, or breaches of the law of love. All the positive institutions of Christ, are with them matters of forbearance. Any of these may be neglected and opposed by their brethren, or they may occasionally observe such precepts in any way most conformable to their prejudices.

This scheme is new only in respect of its being adopted by those who have disavowed the corrupt doctrine and practices of the Man of Sin, and who hold themselves obliged to follow the example of the primitive churches. The principle is similar to that which has been long contended for and extolled in the religious world—that all parties should so far lay aside their peculiar marks of distinction as to hold free communion, at least in their own places of worship, with serious professors of all other descriptions.

It appears to me that there is little reason to complain so loudly of the want of forbearance, in this view of it, among

professing Christians. The number of those who cannot adopt such an extensive plan of religious fellowship, is very small indeed when compared with the immense multitudes who are willing to go as far as they can possibly wish. We may see, however, from long experience, that those loose methods of proceeding have had no tendency to produce Christian unity; and this shows, that the fond expectation of being able to teach many who are now weak in the faith, by indulging their prejudices and habits, is not very well founded.

It may be proper here to note the inconsistency which would arise from explaining weakness in the faith in the way in which my opponents understand it; reserving my own views of it to be introduced in the proper place. They seem to consider all who differ from them in relation to Divine ordinances, as weak in the faith. Consequently, those who maintain that the presence of an elder is necessary to the due administration of the Lord's Supper; that persons unbaptised ought not to be admitted to the fellowship of the church; and that the whole merits of every case of discipline ought to be laid before the church, to enable them to form a proper judgment of it, are denominated *weak* in the faith: probably those also who have not freedom to eat blood. Now, I am far from taking it as an affront to be classed among the weak; if this be a mistake, it is one of less consequence than any other into which they have fallen. But, were the churches who differ from them to follow the same rule of judging about weak and strong—which, if it be scriptural, they are equally bound to follow—persons of the very same description would there be denominated *strong* in the faith! Can it be believed that such express contradictions are warranted by any thing which God hath spoken?

One of the chief arguments in favour of this unscriptural forbearance is, that it is necessary, in order to free the disciples from the trammels of human authority in matters of religion, and that the conscience of every one of them may in all things be immediately subject to the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ. * They consider all churches, Independents and Baptists not excepted, as following the tyrannical footsteps of the Church of Rome, if they have fixed principles, and require of those who join them, so far as they are yet instructed, an acquiescence in their order, worship, and government. This, they think, must prevent believers from seeking fellowship with them, and lead those who are already joined, to be more under the influence of the fear of the church than the fear of God,

* It seems wonderful that any person of principle should attempt to establish the authority of Christ by tolerating the neglect of his laws.

and rather to act opposite to their conviction than run the hazard of incurring censure. Here, again, I must be permitted to make a general reference to such uncharitable conclusions.

Such evils may have happened in Independent and Baptist Churches; for I do not maintain that there are no unprincipled persons among them. But those evils are not the necessary result of a church adhering to the precepts and examples of the New Testament, in relation to its worship and order. If some of the people of God stand aloof from them, is it not because they are averse to the simplicity of the Christian worship, purity of communion, and other things which are clearly exemplified in the approved conduct of the first churches? And would it be any evidence of a church's subjection to Christ, were its members avowedly permitted to neglect his institutions, or to observe them in a manner essentially different from the pattern set before us in the Word of God?

If there be any who remain in churches, opposite to their own conviction of duty, and conceal their real sentiments, or act against their light, from the fear of being separated, why should this be imputed to the arbitrary procedure of churches? This argument concludes equally against excommunication on any ground. Were a man sober and honest merely because the church would put him away if he were a thief or a drunkard, he would be destitute of the fear of God. But although the terror of excommunication in such cases be held out to all, 1 Cor. v., this does not prevent any one from having a conscience towards God in living soberly and righteously, under the influence of his grace which bringeth salvation. It ought to be remembered that He who excludes certain characters from the kingdom of God, hath also commanded them to be separated from churches; and that it ill becomes a disciple of Christ, to make the fear of one of these, incompatible with that of the other. This has the appearance of setting the authority of the judge against the authority of the Lawgiver.

To threaten an offending brother with excommunication from a church, appears to me not very consistent with the spirit of love and meekness, as it is also beyond the province of an individual, and not likely to produce a good effect. But it is termed "a punishment inflicted by many," and certainly is intended to move the person with fear, both before and after his exclusion. He is put away "for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus;" and thus is reminded of the final separation which shall take place between the righteous and the wicked. To what purpose are we commanded to tell our brother his fault, to take with us one or two more, and then to tell it to the church, if he have no cause to

be alarmed by this procedure, and if such alarm can have no tendency to produce genuine repentance, but on the contrary, as is asserted, to harden him against the fear of God?

In answer to this it may be said, that, when the discipline of a church is conducted agreeably to the Word of God, and when nothing is made an offence except that which, unrepented of, really deserves exclusion, then there is just cause of fear, and the most salutary consequences are to be expected from this Divine appointment. But if churches make arbitrary laws, and if disciples are afraid of excommunication for not submitting to these, they depart from the fear of God. This I admit, and we seem to be agreed in peremptorily refusing that churches are authorized to make laws, while my opponents give them the power of permitting brethren to disobey some of those which God hath made.

It would be well if opponents, especially when Divine truth is concerned, would allow themselves to discern, and freely to admit, where the difference really lies. This would prevent much confusion and vain jangling, and many personal accusations for which there is no just and solid ground.

That which requires the most impartial consideration, and the most unfeigned respect and deference, is the appeal to the Scriptures; at least these are all due to the texts which are quoted for the confirmation of this doctrine. It is affirmed that the Word of God expressly enjoins that sort of forbearance for which they plead. If this assertion be well founded, all reasoning is utterly futile, all opposition is vain and presumptuous.

Two passages of Scripture are chiefly insisted on; the one respecting weak Jews, Rom. xiv. 15, the other relating to the case of weak Gentiles, 1 Cor. viii. The argument adduced from these is briefly this—God had received Jews who were weak in respect of their attachment to the law of Moses, and weak Gentiles who had conscience of an idol, and he commanded the strong to receive these weak believers. We are therefore under the same obligation to have fellowship with disciples, how much soever they may differ from us about the observance of Christ's ordinances. They are persons weak in the faith, and is it our bounden duty to receive them.

I shall first consider the forbearance enjoined by the Apostle towards Jews who were weak in the faith.

He directs the church at Rome to "receive him that is weak in the faith," to beware of despising him, to treat him with the utmost tenderness, and to make no such use of their own liberty as might tend to stumble their weak brother, or make him fall into sin, by acting in opposition to the conviction of his own

mind. He concludes thus: "We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us, to the glory of God."

The weak person was a Jew, who was attached to the law of Moses, and made a distinction of meats and days, refusing to eat the flesh of animals rendered unclean by the appointment of God, and keeping days which had been set apart by the same authority. His weakness appears, not merely from his being incapable of perceiving that the ceremonial part of the law was fulfilled and virtually abolished by the death of Christ; but from the excess of his scrupulosity leading him to abstain from meats, which never were prohibited since the grant of animal food to Noah. "Another who is weak eateth herbs." In mixed companies he might be at a loss to know which of the meats offered to him were prohibited articles, and whether any of the animal food was completely free from a mixture of blood; therefore he ate no flesh, that it might not be possible for him to commit sin in this respect. The principle on which he acted was not that of following the traditions of the elders, which certainly the Apostle would not have treated with so much respect; it was a fear of sinning against God.

Let it be remarked that though there were doubtless weak Gentiles at Rome, yet their scruples of this sort, if they had any, could not have been so indulged; for they were prohibited from keeping the law of Moses, as shall afterwards be more fully explained.

Those among the Gentile believers who were established in the faith, are in some respects included among the strong, as seems to be intimated by the expression "God hath received him," which has an immediate reference to the strong, and agrees with Acts xv. 9, "God put no difference between us (Jews) and them (Gentiles,) purifying their hearts by faith." It appears, likewise, that Jews and Gentiles are included when the Apostle says, "Receive ye one another as Christ also received us, to the glory of God," Rom. xv. 7; for he immediately describes the mercy of God towards both, and particularly dwells upon the calling of the Gentiles. Those of them who were strong in the faith, were under the same obligation as were the Jews to receive the weak, to bear their infirmities, and to beware of putting any stumbling-block in their way.

Yet I cannot think that Jews and Gentiles are contradistinguished as being weak and strong, 1st, Because those epithets were not justly applicable to each class respectively. Paul, who was a Jew, includes himself among the strong, and some of the

Gentiles might rank among the weak. 2d, Because Gentile Christians were absolutely prohibited from conforming to the law of Moses. They were delivered from that yoke by the decree of the Apostles, and elders, and brethren at Jerusalem, Acts xv., occasioned by "some having troubled them with words subverting their souls, saying, Ye must be circumcised, and keep the law of Moses;" of which decree the Apostle James, and all the elders, afterwards said, "As touching the Gentiles who believe, we have written and concluded that they observe no such thing, save only that they keep themselves from things offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication," Acts xxi. 25.

It is impossible, surely, that Paul, who magnified his office as the Apostle of the Gentiles, could enjoin upon *them* abstinence from meats prohibited by the law of Moses. He was a bold and zealous advocate for the liberty of the Gentiles; and it appears, from his Epistle to the Galatians, not only that both Jews and Gentiles departed from the true grace of God, when in any respect, less or more, they sought justification by the deeds of the law, but that the latter could not obey the peculiarities of the law of Moses, without some way having an eye to this as the ground of their acceptance with God. They never were under that law; they were completely freed from it by an express revelation; they had no just reason, therefore, to fear that they would sin against God by not conforming to the law; on the contrary, where they did conform to it by the influence of judaizing teachers, they disobeyed God.

What, then, should tempt the Gentiles to return to those weak and beggarly elements, had they not expected thus to perfect their Christian character as a ground of their hope towards God? The strong reproof which Paul gave to Peter for laying a snare before the Gentiles in this respect, and the way in which he connects their freedom from the ordinances of Moses with being justified, not by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, Gal. ii. 11—17, places the subject in the clearest light, and shows that, when a Gentile conformed to the law of Moses, he denied the faith.

So far then as the strong, addressed in Rom. xiv., are directed to abridge themselves of their Christian liberty lest they should stumble the weak; and so far as the latter are indulged in their scruples about meats and days, I am obliged to consider them all as Jews exclusively. The ceremonial part of the law of Moses, as has been observed, and indeed the whole law, as God's covenant with a typical people, a nation of this world, was virtually abrogated by the death of Christ. But it seems evidently to have been the design of God, in con-

descension to the weakness of his people among the Jews, to bring them off gradually from their attachment to the law given to their fathers; and consequently, that at least till the Epistle to the Hebrews was written, and perhaps till Jerusalem was destroyed, Jewish Christians were not sinning against God by keeping the law of Moses.

This is put beyond all dispute by the decision of the question at Jerusalem, Acts xv. How else could the Apostles have issued a decree containing merely the charter of *Gentile liberty?* On what other ground can we conceive that the souls of the Gentiles, and not of the Jews, were *subverted* by being circumcised and keeping the law? Not a word is said on that occasion about the criminality of the Jews attending to the institutions of Moses. And, about eight years after that period, the Apostle James remarked, without censure, that "many thousands of the Jews were all zealous of the law;" while he says, "as touching the Gentiles, who believe, we have written and concluded that they observe no such thing."

Paul himself "walked orderly, and kept the law," Acts xxi. 24. He circumcised Timothy, Acts xvi. 3. This fact clearly shows that as yet a Jew might lawfully be circumcised; while its being said that he did this "because of the Jews who were in those parts," seems to prove that the continuance of Jewish rites was not an express obligation, but a merciful indulgence. Compare this with Paul's conduct in relation to Titus, who was a Greek. He resisted all the attempts of the zealous Jews "to compel Titus to be circumcised," and gave place "by subjection to false judaizing brethren, no, not for an hour, *that the truth of the Gospel might continue with the Gentiles*," Gal. ii. 3—5.

The Apostle Paul, and those of his Jewish brethren who were strong in the faith, and who saw clearly that the coming of the Just One and his obedience unto death put an end to the typical dispensation, "believed that they might eat all things" except what the law of God still prohibits, namely, things offered to idols and blood. "I know, (says Paul,) and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself." * It was, however, the duty of such to imitate the long-suffering of God, to pity the weakness of their brethren, and never to

* General expressions, in many cases, must be understood with some limitation. When Christ said, "Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man," he referred to a man's ordinary and lawful food, though eaten with unwashed hands; and had no intention at that time to reverse the prohibition of Moses with respect to unclean beasts, as is supposed, for they never were unclean in the sense in which the Pharisees understood them to be so; they were such only as being prohibited by God.

use their privilege in this respect when there was a danger of stumbling their brother, and "of destroying him with their meat, for whom Christ died." The principle of the Apostle's reasoning is this, "All things indeed are pure; but it is evil for that man who eateth with offence."

From all that has been stated, it appears that the Apostle does not require the Church at Rome to forbear the breach of any moral precept, or the neglect of any ordinance. The weakness of those whose infirmities were to be borne, so far from operating in the way of setting at nought any thing commanded by God, led them to the strict observance of ancient Divine institutions, which were now ready to vanish away, and even to go beyond what the law of God required, that they might avoid sin. With what propriety, then, can an injunction to receive them, be made an argument for receiving those who will not obey the laws of Christ? Or what affinity is there between the most scrupulous attention to Divine precepts, and the entire neglect, or perhaps the avowed contempt, of them?

What practical use, then, it may be said, are we to make of the Apostle's injunctions respecting forbearance? There are

The object of the Pharisees was another thing altogether, both as to motives and outward form. It was to enforce a superstitious tradition of the elders, tending to obliterate all just ideas of moral good and evil; and which surely we ought not to confound with Divine precepts, by imagining that our Lord's censure applies to both! Nor is it possible to show that the doctrine taught on this occasion reverses the prohibition of things offered to idols and blood, for these were never allowed to the people of God, neither before nor since the law; they are most solemnly and expressly prohibited by that very decree which ascertains the liberty of Gentile Christians, Acts xv. It is true the Apostle gives this permission, "Whatever is sold in the shambles, eat—and whatsoever is set before you, eat." But the liberty here given is in connexion with some very awful expressions referring to the same prohibition, "Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils. Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he?" When he affirms, 1 Tim. iv. 4., that "every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused if it be received with thanksgiving;" he adds, "for it is sanctified by the Word of God, and prayer." Now, surely, nothing is thus sanctified which the Word of God prohibits.

In like manner, when he says, "I know and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus that there is nothing unclean of itself;" the meaning is, "it is not unclean by virtue of any thing inherent in the food, and it can only be made such by a Divine prohibition." On the other hand, "it is unclean to him that *esteemeth* it to be unclean," and this estimation, in the case referred to, was not mere fancy or superstition; it was founded on a part of Divine revelation, which they considered as being yet obligatory on Jewish Christians.

Let Christians now beware of tampering with Divine prohibitions, and founding, on their supposed nullity, doctrines subversive of the laws of Christ.

now no disputes among Christians about Mosaic institutions, but there are many differences; and why should not all these be treated in the same manner? This, I am afraid, would be putting a stumbling-block in our brother's way, more dangerous than any thing against which the believers at Rome were cautioned by the Apostle. What! shall we put the false worship of the Man of Sin on a level with former institutions of Divine appointment, and say that there is no greater evil in refusing to keep the ordinances of Christ, than there was in scrupulously adhering to the law of Moses, after it was fulfilled in Christ, while as yet their observance of it was not prohibited by express Divine authority?

Still, however, lessons of forbearance are taught us in the passage under consideration. It gives an eminent display of the sympathy and tender compassion of God towards weak believers, which we are called to imitate. It is our bounden duty to receive him that is weak in the faith, to sympathize with him, to bear his infirmities, to respect his conscientious scruples, to beware of saying or doing any thing which might be the occasion of stumbling him; to pity without despising his ignorance, and to teach him gradually as he is able to bear it, recollecting that Christ so taught his disciples, who were "slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken."

These are general principles which ought always to operate on the minds of Christians. But further, it is a mistake to suppose that nothing can now occur among them similar to the disputes at Rome about meats and days.

The prohibition of blood is none of the typical things which were to give place to the great antitype. Had it been such, the people of Israel would rather have been commanded to eat blood, as a type of living by eating the flesh and drinking the blood of the Son of Man. The reason given for this prohibition also still remains, and is stronger now than ever, namely, reverence for that which atones for sin and placates God, who spoke thus to his ancient people, "I will set my face against that soul that eateth blood, and will cut him off from among his people. *For the life of the flesh is in the blood;* and I have given it to you upon the altar, to make an atonement for your souls: *for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul,*" Lev. xvii. 10, 11. And the same thing is hinted at in the first prohibition, delivered along with the grant of animal food to man; "But flesh *with the life thereof,* which is *the blood* thereof, shall you not eat," Gen. ix. 4. Former laws on this head are obligatory, because blood is prohibited in the plainest terms, Acts xv. 21, where two methods of using it are stated and forbidden; "things strangled, and blood."

There is no weakness in abstaining from blood, as some erroneously think. But a weak believer may scruple to eat fowls, considering them as things strangled, though it be plain that the manner of killing animals is not intended, but merely blood in every way in which it can be used, whether mixed with the flesh of the animal, or separated from it. This scruple is precisely similar to that of him who confined himself to herbs, though he was not prohibited by the law of Moses from eating flesh; only the use of blood as food is more clearly unlawful, than eating any sort of flesh without blood would have been to a Jewish Christian.

This is one instance out of many which might be adduced, to show what class of things seems to be intended, when the Apostle uses such gentle terms in describing persons weak in the faith, and considers them more as objects of compassion than of censure. The evil of their not discerning that the ceremonial law was abolished by the death of Christ, and the danger of their being in this respect weak in the faith, has been greatly magnified.

It is true that weakness in the faith is not a blameless thing, and that the persons so described by the Apostle were in circumstances of danger, arising, however, chiefly from the manner in which they were treated by their stronger brethren. But Paul represents the weak as not only being in the faith, but as scrupulously conscientious, as doing all that they did to the Lord; and whatever might be the real extent of their guilt, he charges them with no offence against the law of Christ except that of judging the strong; all their deficiencies, which appear so highly criminal to my opponents, are denominated infirmities.

It is evident, therefore, that the forbearance which the Lord enjoins, must be something else than permitting our Christian brethren to neglect, alter, or modify, the institutions of the Gospel.

Let us now examine whether forbearance towards weak Gentiles "who had conscience of an idol," will justify this plea; or whether indeed any forbearance ever was enjoined towards those who partook of heathen sacrifices in heathen temples. They surely do not mean to say that Christians ought to forbear idolatry, when they represent the weak brother who sat at meat in the idol's temple, "as having some awe or dread of the idol on his mind; yet not only were his prejudices to be borne with, but great care was to be taken lest he should be led to imitate his stronger brethren, and thereby act contrary to his conscience."

Aside from conscience altogether, there is, in all that concerns moral duty, something right and something wrong in its

own nature, which cannot be affected by the bold speculations, or the timid scruples of fallible men. What then is right in the present question, which is treated at some length, 1 Cor. viii. x., and 2 Cor. vi.? It is said that they who sat at meat in the idol's temple did right, provided "they knew that an idol is nothing in the world, that there is no other God but one, and that meat commendeth us not to God," if by so doing they did not stumble weak brethren, who had not the same degree of knowledge, and "who with conscience of the idol did eat (the food) as a thing offered unto an idol."

The Apostle admits the principle on which some of the Corinthians attempted to justify their idolatrous practice. But he is far from admitting their application of it, though in the eighth chapter he states only the danger of wounding the consciences of the weak by inducing them to follow the same practice with a scrupulous and doubtful mind, as if he had said, "Were it so that you could justify your conduct on the ground of your knowing that an idol is nothing in the world, an imaginary being, a mere nonentity, and that there is only one God, the sole and exclusive object of worship, whom you think you can honour in a heathen temple, partaking with idolaters,* still much evil may result from your making this use of what you conceive to be Christian liberty. You may lead others who have not your knowledge to act as you do, while their own consciences do not free them from the guilt of worshipping idols."

That the Apostle, far from approving of the conduct of those reasoners, who no doubt thought themselves men of very liberal and enlarged sentiments, utterly abhorred it, appears from the awful and alarming manner in which he addresses them, chap. x., where he calls upon the church as his dearly beloved to flee from idolatry, and shows the impossibility of having communion in the body and blood of Christ, in the ordinance of the Supper, if they should partake of heathen sacrifices. He refutes the argument of the enlightened men at Corinth, without denying their assertions. "Behold Israel after the flesh. Are not they who eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar?

* The argument of the Corinthians is similar to that which at one time gave an enlightened clergyman of the church of Ireland freedom to dispense the sacrament to every human being who required it. He considered that rite as having nothing to do with the religion of Christ. It was a mere invention of men, and a part of the political order of the state in which he was hired to officiate! By such reasoning we might justify all the superstition and idolatry of the church of Rome, and deny that idols *can* be worshipped, or that the ordinances of Christ *can* be profaned!

What say I then? That the idol is any thing, or that which is offered in sacrifice to idols is any thing? But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils and not to God; and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils. Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of devils; ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table and of the table of devils. Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he?" In 2 Cor. vi. 14, to the end, there is a most pathetic address to the same purpose, concluding with these words, "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, *and touch not the unclean thing*, and I will receive you." Surely, then, it cannot be supposed that Christians, whether weak or strong, were permitted upon any principle to go into a heathen temple, and to partake of their altar by eating of their sacrifices?

I am doubtful whether we must necessarily conclude that he who ate with conscience of the idol, had any respect or veneration for the idol; indeed I am sure that, if he had no such respect, so much the more would his conscience condemn him. It appears to me that he might be in the same state of mind with him who said, at an entertainment in a private house, 1 Cor. x. 28, "This is offered in sacrifice unto idols," supposing the objection to be started by a conscientious brother. Although he went farther than was intended by the Divine prohibition, yet nothing appears in his scruple except a fear of sinning against God. He still considered the food, after it had been sold in the shambles, as not sanctified by the Word of God; it was polluted in his views, as having been once offered in sacrifice to idols. If he ate while this was his conviction, he must have defiled his conscience; he must have eaten it "as a thing offered to an idol," for so it appeared to him, not because he venerated, but because he abhorred an idol.

In like manner, he who partook in the heathen temple might be convinced of the impiety of worshipping any except the true God, without being able to discern that no other gods exist, or that meat commendeth us not to God; for it is admitted in one sense that "there are gods many and lords many," and that we please God by doing his will. Consequently, the enlightened men had a salvo which he wanted; they acted in opposition to a Divine precept; he not only did the same, but rebelled against the light of his own conscience.

Shall we then attempt to justify those who provoked the Lord to jealousy by their specious reasoning and ungodly conduct? or shall we affirm that some awe or dread of an idol, and other idolatrous prejudices, were treated by an Apostle as matter of forbearance? The truth is, that the things which are considered

as forbearable in this case, as well as in the case of Jewish Christians, are mere infirmities—ignorance, weakness, timidity, over-scrupulosity, leading the person to deny himself the use of some lawful enjoyments, from a fear of encroaching upon an express Divine precept. And the same compassion and tenderness, and care to avoid wounding the weak consciences of our brethren, or giving them an occasion of falling, are strongly enjoined.

It is not my intention to affirm that none of those who boasted of their knowledge at Corinth, actually did eat without remorse in the idol's temple, on the principle stated in 1 Cor. viii., nor do I say that no weak brother defiled his conscience by doing the same thing, without being fully agreed in their principle. All that I insist upon is, that such practices were accounted by the Apostle Paul totally un-forbearable.

I have only to remark farther, on the views adopted by many on this subject, that they seem to consider Jewish and Gentile prejudices (the one relating to the typical worship and ritual which God had instituted, the other to the heathen mythology and the worship of false gods) as in some way resembling each other, and both entitled to the indulgence and forbearance of Christians. And then, if this be admitted, it seems comparatively not unreasonable to demand the same indulgence for all the false worship of the Man of Sin, which erring creatures may think compatible with faith in Christ.

The mere stating of these things will, I trust, be sufficient to produce a serious doubt in the minds of those who make such bold assertions.

Having given an outline of some of the most material things which appear censurable in this view of Christian forbearance, it is proper that I should now endeavour to state my own, so far as that has not been already done. Impartial readers will probably see enough in the preceding pages to convince them that non-forbearance is not a principle held by me and many others, against whom it has been repeatedly charged. If it is meant non-forbearance with respect to certain things only, which I really think is the case, why is it not uniformly so expressed? The want of forbearance is frequently imputed by them to their opponents, apparently in a general way, and they describe them as "those who oppose forbearance." Now, I must be permitted to say, that this accusation is entirely groundless, so far as principle is concerned, though I certainly will not affirm that I have never deviated from it in practice. Even in that respect, however, I might deny the charge in the unlimited manner in which it has been brought forward.

Ascertain what true Christian forbearance is, and I shall

admit in some respects the obligation which lies upon the people of God to exercise it in its full extent, without restriction or limitation of any kind. It has been remarked justly, that when we consider any commanded duty as obscurely revealed, this is a clear evidence that we do not understand it; the obscurity is in our minds, not in the manner in which God hath revealed his will. So, also, when we imagine that we may go too far in yielding obedience to a Divine precept, there must be some mistake in our perception of the import of that precept.

Who, among all the followers of Christ, ever imagined that he could exceed in love to God and to the brethren? There may, indeed, be a spurious sort of love, which prompts us to be partial to its objects, to overlook or excuse their faults, to flatter their pride, and to indulge them in sin; and all those evils, with many others in their train, which accompany the exercise of a spurious and unscriptural forbearance. But true and genuine love "worketh no ill to his neighbour;" and with all safety we may affirm the same of that forbearance which God enjoins. His law in its general tendency, and in all its minute requirements, is holy, and just, and good.

Many religious professors have long been groping in the dark on this subject, and yet some of them, confident of their own knowledge, and notwithstanding their great professions of forbearance, treat with much severity and contempt all who differ from them on this favourite point, which seems to be, in their view, almost the sum total of pure religion. Never yet, however, have they been agreed among themselves in relation to the *extent* of forbearance; for few of them have gone so far as to adopt my principle, and fairly to avow that we cannot exceed in this duty. Why? Because they have not a just view of the *nature* of the duty. They who have *any* principle of religion, cannot propose to make *all* the laws of Christ matters of forbearance; and, therefore, the inquiry has generally been, what things are essential or non-essential, of small or of great importance,* clearly or darkly revealed, and in what manner shall visible Christianity be satisfactorily distinguished?

It is not asserted, however, by my opponents, that a certain number of duties enjoined in the Word of God are in this view non-essentials, or of small importance, or doubtfully and unin-

* It is not my intention to deny that some things in distinction from others are essential to true Christianity, nor to affirm that all the laws of Christ are equally important. But nothing is so unessential or unimportant as not to require implicit obedience. It is essential to the character of a Christian that he desire to know the will of Christ, and that he cheerfully obey it, whatever self-denial this may require.

telligibly stated. But it is said, if I be not mistaken, that all the laws of Christ relative to New Testament worship and the order of churches, however plain and explicit, ought to be matters of forbearance at the present time, while it is confessed that they were not such in the apostolic age.

I would ask, is this "counting the Son of God worthy of more glory than Moses," whose ordinances were not so treated? Is there any difference between saying that we *forbear* baptism or the weekly observance of the Lord's Supper, or blood eating, or any other positive law, and saying that we *permit certain persons to disobey those laws?* And who gave us authority to act thus? Did the God of heaven establish plain and simple laws for the government of his churches, and at the same time give to any individual, or to any church, a power to dispense with those laws? Is it possible that any person can allow the acknowledged laws of Christ to be avowedly disobeyed by members of his own church, without considering such laws as of very little importance, or even without doubting whether they be in reality enjoined by the authority of God? At least, if human nature were consistent, this would be a fair conclusion.

A scriptural term, is used which tends to mislead the unwary professors of the faith of Jesus. Allowing our brethren to neglect and oppose the commandments of the Lord is called *forbearance*, as if that were the forbearance which is so strongly and affectionately enjoined upon the churches by the Apostles of our Lord! But that term is never used in reference to the permission of disobedience to the laws of Christ throughout all the New Testament, except in Rev. ii. 2, and there a church is commended because she could not thus forbear. "Thou canst not bear them that are evil."

So much for the negative side of the question, to which I may occasionally yet return. It may be more difficult to give a summary view of my sentiments on the positive side, and certainly I cannot go into a full detail. But, as I have nothing to conceal on a subject so intimately connected with the peace and comfort of the people of God, and with the purity of their communion in churches, several things shall be simply stated, in order to give some idea of what I conceive to be the mind of God with respect to this important duty.

Many are the cautions given us in the Word of God to take heed to our own spirits, to repress and mortify every inimical disposition towards our brethren, to avoid all offensive speech and behaviour, to love them with pure hearts fervently, to abound in all the outward expressions of that love, and, in the whole of our correspondence with them, to please them for their good to edification. We are corrupt and imperfect crea-

tures; and as there is much within ourselves to impede the performance of those duties, so also, much discouragement arises from the natural and moral infirmities of our brethren. These, however, can form no excuse for our neglect of duty. But they evidently impose upon us the necessity of forbearing one another in love.

For the sake of perspicuity, I shall place under distinct heads the various branches of the subject which occur to me.

I. The disciples of Christ are all of one mind with respect to the way of salvation through him; this truth is held without controversy among them, and no sentiment which is subversive of it can be forborne. But it is not expected that, on every subject relating to this, they will all think alike, or express themselves in the same manner. Nor can it reasonably be supposed that they will give the same explanation of every scripture text, though there be upon the whole no difference among them relative to the doctrine of the Gospel. If there be any thing in these various modes of thinking which requires forbearance, it may easily be forborne, and need not be an occasion of stumbling to the lovers of unity; for the variety of sentiment here referred to, is consistent with having "one faith, one hope, one Lord, one baptism, one God and Father of all."

II. There are many things disagreeable in the natural tempers and dispositions, and even in the manner of some brethren, which are either not sinful in themselves, or merely indicative of the imperfection which in one way or other pervades every human being. These are not offences against the law of Christ, at least not such as are cognizable by us who are daily transgressors, and they ought to be accounted matters of forbearance. This, indeed, is universally acknowledged. But while we admit the principle, our practice may not sufficiently correspond with it; for that which hurts our pride, and seems to deny us the respect to which we suppose ourselves entitled, is frequently thought, or at least is treated, as if it were more unbearable than offences of greater magnitude.

III. It is no less true that there are many partial deviations from moral duty in the general conduct of all Christians. Sin cleaves to them in every thing in which they are engaged, whether it be the immediate service of God, the business of life, or the duties of love which they owe to one another and to all men. This imperfection appears in various degrees, and in some persons so conspicuously, that the sincerity of their profession is rendered in some measure doubtful. Hence arise frequent opportunities for giving serious and friendly admonitions, when there is no offence which ought to be esteemed a

proper ground for exclusion from a church. And observe, when discipline cannot be thus finished, there is no good reason for beginning it; much evil has frequently resulted from taking this unwarrantable step.

Here is full scope for the duty of forbearance. But we do not really exercise it merely by doing nothing towards the excommunication of our brother, if we do not also treat him in a kind and friendly way, and avoid distressing him with frequent chiding, manifesting by our general conduct that we "can reasonably bear with him," and that we have no desire to reproach him on account of his infirmities, nor to traduce his character. Where lowliness, meekness, long-suffering, and unfeigned love are wanting, there can be none of that forbearance which the law of Christ requires.

IV. Forbearance towards the weak, whose scrupulous consciences will not allow them to go to the full extent of their Christian liberty, is unquestionably the duty of their stronger brethren, who should beware of speaking or acting in such a way as might embolden the weak to do that which, although not sinful in itself, is opposite to the light of their consciences; or which, if it be sinful, is in them doubly so, because they know that they are doing evil. But this has already been fully discussed.

V. Others may be apt, through ignorance and the sinful bias of their hearts, to overstep the bounds of Christian liberty, and to come far short in the practice of many duties, some of which they need to learn after being added to a church. Forbearance is likewise due to *them;* for I have no idea that persons must know and give their assent to all the principles and practices of a church before their admission. They may be ignorant of many things, while they give satisfactory evidence of having been taught to know the truth by which the guilty are saved, and of their willingness to be subject to the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is expected that they should have no fixed principle against any law of Christ, so as to preclude conviction, and that they should be of a teachable spirit, by which I do not mean that they are implicitly to receive all our instructions at first hearing, or in a short period. Some may continue long ignorant, and others may not acquire much knowledge all their days; but provided they do not resist the authority of God in his word, nor act in opposition to the laws of Christ, they are to be treated with patience and long-suffering: And when they offend in this manner, our conduct towards them ought still to be marked by the same spirit, even while we are employing the

means which God hath appointed to be used for their recovery It is surely possible to distinguish between simple ignorance, which is no proper ground of offence, and acting upon an avowed principle against some of the laws of Christ, after every endeavour has been used to convince them of their error.

This is another branch of legitimate forbearance, which gives no sinful latitude, but has a tendency to promote the safety, the edification, and comfort of a church of Christ.

VI. A right temper and state of mind towards our brethren, is that which I conceive to be principally intended by forbearance, and to this I earnestly request the close attention of the reader.

A meaning has been affixed to the term forbearance, altogether different from, and inconsistent with, that which we understand by "bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering, forgiveness, and charity," all which are joined with it, Col. iii. 12—14.; and in Eph. iv. 1—3, it is thus associated: "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you, that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." When we are exhorted to meekness, kindness, patience, and long-suffering, we never think ourselves called upon to indulge our brethren in the perpetual neglect of Divine commandments; but the term forbearance, is the only one that has been resorted to for that purpose. Yet surely there is some affinity between all these terms which have been mentioned; patience and long-suffering, in particular, are not easily distinguishable from each other, or from forbearance.*

From this it may fairly be concluded that forbearance refers chiefly to our patient and kind treatment of brethren who have something about them displeasing to us, and who may have given us a ground of personal offence. We are commanded to be kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven us, Eph. iv. 32. I call this forbearance. Again, "See that none render evil for evil to any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men," 1 Thess. v. 15. I call this forbearance, and it is not confined to our brethren in Christ; it extends to all men. Much of this doctrine is to be

* Patience is not in any of the texts quoted above: but in many others it is so applied. "Be patient *towards* all men," 1 Thess. v. 14. See also, 2 Tim. ii. 24, Rev. xiv. 12, 1 Pet. ii. 20, James v. 7, &c.

found in our Lord's sermon on the Mount, and in many other passages of Scripture, which are just so many calls to the exercise of forbearance, and instruct us in the nature of that duty.

It appears, therefore, that a meek and inoffensive behaviour, non-resistance of evil, patient bearing of injuries, forgiveness of these, and long-suffering in all our dealings with our brethren, constitute the very essence of forbearance. Even when our brother's offence is immediately against God, we may find occasion for the exercise of patience and long-suffering, not only because we ought to be offended when God is dishonoured, but because it will frequently happen that our brother will give us some personal offence, by resisting our attempts to bring him to repentance. Should we have no guard upon our own spirits, and transgress the law of forbearance in this view of it, that which was originally a sin against God may become a mere personal quarrel; and our attempts to convince our brother, while we are in this state of mind, may really tend to harden him in sin.

Differences may occur among brethren which arise chiefly from the pride and humour of contending parties. The matter in dispute is of no importance, in comparison of living in peace, and imitating the meekness and gentleness of Christ. A strong view is taken of it; the difference, if there be any that is worth contending for, is magnified beyond all bounds; hard words ensue; personal offences are multiplied; and every one pleads conscience, while, with respect to the love of God and of the brethren, his conscience is fast asleep!

In such cases there is no cure for the evil but "putting off the old man with his deeds, and putting on, as the elect of God, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, and long-suffering." This is the true spirit of forbearance. It extinguishes all unfounded personal quarrels; it reconciles all differences which do not really affect the truth concerning Christ, or the allegiance which we owe to him, the King of Zion.

It is manifest also, though perhaps very little attended to, that forbearance relates not merely to the evils which we see in our brethren, and which call for the exercise of it, but to those which are in ourselves, whether we duly perceive them or not. In the sense in which forbearance is generally understood, we naturally seek it both from ourselves and others, to an extent which would be extremely injurious to our true interest. In opposition to this, it is our duty "to crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts," to give no quarter to our own malignant passions, to refrain from "all bitterness, and wrath, and

anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, with all malice;" and if there be any other thing which is contrary to the genuine influence of the Gospel of peace. The Apostle's injunction to "put away all these," is a call to mutual forbearance, and shows the various particulars in which it consists. *

Thus, when masters are commanded to "forbear threatening," they may notwithstanding be justly offended, and give firm and temperate reproofs. But they must not threaten in a high, arbitrary, and domineering way, as if they were forgetting that they also have a master in heaven. Or if "moderate threatening," or "remitting threatened punishment," be preferred, it comes to the same thing. The duty enjoined is *forbearance towards servants*, without any approbation of their bad conduct, or any permission given them to disobey lawful commands; and that forbearance is to be exercised by their Christian masters in the way of mortifying their own pride and other evil passions, and preventing their just displeasure from exceeding the bounds of Christian moderation.

In the exercise of forbearance, therefore, we have as much to do with ourselves as with our brethren, who are the objects of it. And if laying aside every inimical passion, together with a patient, kind, and merciful treatment of our brethren, be the thing intended, how amazingly different is this from the view of it which is generally entertained! And how much better is it to maintain the universal obligation of the law of Christ, and the necessity of our subjection to it in some of its most trying precepts, in order to qualify us in any degree for the exercise of forbearance, than to suppose that forbearance itself is an avowed permission to disobey certain things which he hath commanded!

VII. Another mistake about the *nature* of forbearance, which has been cursorily noticed, merits further attention.

So awkwardly and unnaturally has this subject been treated, that among many professing Christians, we seldom hear about forbearance except when they begin to tell us how much opposition to the acknowledged laws of Christ, or what important differences about the Gospel itself, they can bear in those whom they receive into their fellowship. Then, after they are received, forbearance has little or no respect to any thing else, till they begin to differ still more widely; and if those who have introduced new errors be allowed to continue members on any terms, this is called Christian forbearance! They have no idea of

* The prohibition, Matt. vii. 1, "Judge not, that ye be not judged," is of the same nature, and a most essential branch of this duty. Not to judge our brethren, is to forbear them.

forbearance being necessary in a society professing to hold settled principles, and to agree in their views of the doctrine and commandments of the Lord, yet admitting imperfection in unity, as in every thing else.

What occasion, then, was there for the exercise of forbearance in the first churches, among whom no departure from the truth, or from its practical influence, was sanctioned by the Apostles? We have seen that those differences which were permitted by the Apostle Paul, were not in themselves absolutely sinful, and that the real evil on both sides of the question, about meats and days, lay in their state of mind towards each other. Neither of them would have sinned against God, if they had not "walked uncharitably." Nor does it appear, among all the evils which existed in the apostolic churches, that they refused to admit believers, or that any were unjustly put away except in a single instance, where only one person is blamed; and certainly Diotrephes cast none out of the church for want of subjection to the laws of Christ. *

That forbearance has a respect to receiving into a church, and retaining in it, persons weak in the faith, I by no means intend to deny. But this may be done where there is not really that forbearance which ought to pervade the body of Christ. The Church at Rome did not separate their weak brethren, nor is there a hint given that they wished to do so; yet they seem to have thought themselves under no obligation to bear their infirmities. A clearer proof than this cannot be given that a church, without rejecting any who *profess* to believe in Christ, may, after all, be an un-forbearing church.

When brethren are not treated with respect and kindness; when, instead of mutual affection, unity, and peace, there are "debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults," what privilege is there in being retained in a church? And are not some of those evils to be expected where opposite principles and practices are tolerated, giving scope to disputes, and grieving the hearts of many of the brethren who fear God, and tremble at his Word?

VIII. The explanation which I have given of forbearance, seems corroborated by some things revealed in the Scriptures concerning the forbearance of God. It is mentioned in connexion with "the riches of his goodness, and *long-suffering*," Rom. ii. 4; and when it is said, in the same connexion, "not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance,"

* The divisions in the first churches were schisms in the body, not separations from it, 1 Cor. xi. 18.

this teaches us that the Divine long-suffering is abused when men take encouragement from it to sin; that the design of God is to overcome their stubborn hearts, and to make them see the evil of sin, that they may repent and believe the Gospel; as Peter also affirms, "the long-suffering of our Lord is salvation."

It is said, indeed, that the God of Israel "suffered their *manners* in the wilderness about the time of forty years." But the meaning is, he did not punish them as they deserved; "he did not stir up all his wrath." The nature of his forbearance is described by Nehemiah in his confession of the sins of Israel, and of the manifold mercies of God amidst all their provocations, chap. ix. 30, 31. "Yet many years didst thou forbear them, and testifiedst against them by thy Spirit in thy prophets; yet would they not give ear: therefore gavest thou them into the hand of the people of the lands. Nevertheless, for thy great mercies' sake, thou didst not utterly consume them, nor forsake them; for thou art a gracious and merciful God." His forbearance, therefore, is his mercy, his patience and long-suffering towards guilty rebels; and it is perfectly consistent with his testifying against them, and admitting no excuse for transgressing his law.

Is there no difference between the Lord's delaying punishment, or pardoning sin for which the blood of Christ hath atoned, Rom. iii. 25, and permitting men to sin, or leaving it to the choice of any person to obey or disobey his laws? If we admit that this is not the nature of God's forbearance, how can it be justly affirmed that such is the forbearance which he hath enjoined on his people?

The forbearance of God respects not only his own children, but men in general, wicked men, "the unthankful and the evil;" those who "treasure up unto themselves wrath against the day of wrath." Did we properly consider our obligation to imitate God in the exercise of forbearance towards all men, this would tend to correct false ideas respecting the nature of the duty. It does not consist in palliating their sin, nor telling them what parts of the law of God they may safely disobey. We may treat them with meekness, patience, and forbearance, while we affirm that "he who offendeth in one point, is guilty of all," and that "the wages of sin is death."

On the other hand, when we think of the amazing extent of God's long-suffering and forbearance towards his own people, and towards all men, and how much we ourselves stand in need of it, what an argument is this for putting on, as the elect of God, bowels of mercies, long-suffering, and forbearance! The

example set before us is infinite. So far, therefore, from our being in any danger of exceeding here, our deficiency must be greater than I am able to express.

It is pleaded that many of the people of God are at present in antichristian societies, even in the church of Rome itself; ignorant in many respects of the simplicity of the Gospel, the nature of Christ's kingdom, and the order of New Testament churches; yet in these circumstances God hath received them, and he commands us to receive those who are weak in faith.

This I think is the substance of the argument in question; and I freely admit the assertion, that many believers of the Gospel are in national and other corrupt churches, and that it is our duty, so far as we can perceive the truth in them, however obscured, to love them for its sake, "to acknowledge every good thing which is in them in Christ Jesus," to endeavour occasionally to instruct them with meekness, and to maintain that sort of friendly intercourse and fellowship with them of which their present circumstances admit.

But the question is, Whether shall we for their sakes take it upon us to make new laws for the regulation of churches, unknown to the first Christians, or shall we invite them to keep the ordinances *as they were delivered by the Apostles*, and assure them that we are not debarring them from any privilege which God hath given to his people, but that, on the contrary, they exclude themselves, by not being willing to follow Christ in the way which he hath appointed?

I have decidedly adopted the latter plan, because we dare not presume to form churches not resembling those which in Judea were in Christ Jesus, or to esteem any other way preferable to that which the Lord commanded, and which his Apostles faithfully executed, under the infallible guidance of his Holy Spirit.

Every thing of this nature depends entirely on the sovereign will of our Almighty Lord, to whom all power in heaven and earth is given. And his commandment is, "Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world," Matt. xxviii. 19, 20. Is it not plain from this that the nations, or those among them whom God had ordained to eternal life, were first to be made disciples, then baptised, and taught to obey all the commandments of Christ? These, although not exclusively applicable to commandments relative to the duties of disciples in their associated state, (as *they* seem to think who speak of *the* all things which Christ hath commanded,) yet surely must include

separation from the world in religious worship, brotherly love, the order of churches, and every thing relating to his kingdom. The concluding sentence clearly shows that no alteration was to take place at any future period; for Christ promises to be with them *always, even to the end of the world*, that is, wherever his faithful servants, to the latest ages, should preach the same Gospel, and pursue the track which he then laid down.

His Apostles did as he commanded. They preached the Gospel with the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven; as many as gladly received the Word were baptised; the baptised disciples were added to the church, and taught to observe all things commanded by the Lord. Accordingly, it is said of them, that "they continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine, and in the fellowship, and in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers," Acts ii.

My opponents will admit, that no preacher of the Gospel is warranted to baptise any person who does not appear to be a believer in Christ. Why? Because that would be opposite to the commandment of the Lord, to the example just referred to in Acts ii., and to every other instance of baptism recorded in the New Testament. And is it not equally unwarrantable in a church to receive unbaptised members, in opposition to the same commandment, and to the same uniform example? It is not maintained that there were unbaptised disciples in the primitive churches, or that they had more than "one baptism." But it is insisted that we must now forbear their prejudices in favour of an antichristian rite, by which the nations have been made nominal Christians, because prejudices in favour of Jewish rites instituted by God himself were made the subject of a temporary forbearance! Upon the same principle, forbearance may be exercised with those who place baptism and the Lord's Supper among the carnal ordinances which are now abolished, and those who think themselves too spiritual for any of the forms of worship in which the first Christians were engaged.

The rule of forbearance is the Word of God, and not, as is asserted, the sincerity, the devotion, and the general good character of those who transgress the laws of Christ. "The Lord knoweth them who are his;" but we never can be so sure of the Christian character of any person, as we may be of that which the Word of God makes our indispensable duty.

With respect to him who has trespassed against his brother, and hath resisted all the attempts of the injured person, and of one or two more, and of the church, to bring him to repentance, the law of Christ is this: "Let him be unto thee as an

heathen man and a publican." There may be various opinions about the character of the offender, but there can be only one sentiment with respect to the commandment of Christ in such cases, among those who are willing to be governed by it. And even if all had the same views of the former good character of him who now stands guilty before them, could they plead, in arrest of that judgment which the Head of the Church obliges them to pronounce, that he is an eminent Christian, and that this has been proved by the whole tenor of his life for many years? There is no rule in the Scriptures to this effect; but there is one in direct opposition to it: "I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, that thou observe these things, without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality," 1 Tim. v. 21.

I will not deny that, in some cases, *the children of God* may thus be put away from his churches. Nay, I could not affirm with absolute certainty that the wicked person, 1 Cor. v., was not a believer in Christ, who had been left to commit a shocking crime, as was the case with David king of Israel. But, whatever he might really be in the sight of God, the duty of the church was clear; the commandment was express, "Put away from among yourselves that wicked person."

It is not therefore our duty, whether the offence be of a private nature, or a public crying sin, to suffer our judgments to be swayed by former good appearances, or what some have called a decided character. We ought to proceed in the straight line of duty, and to do what God commands, without imagining that we are answerable for the consequences. If some of the persons whom his Word obliges us to put away, should be those whom he hath called by his grace, he will seek and find his straying sheep, and make his own ordinance of excommunication the means of bringing them back to his fold.

Such being the duty of a Christian church in relation to their own members, it is equally incumbent on them to "stand fast, and to hold the traditions which they have been taught," by the writings of the Apostles, though their doing this should seem to debar from their fellowship some of those who know the truth, and in many respects live under its influence. Certain it is that if we really do so, we give them no just ground of offence. When we endeavour to walk by the rule of the Word of God, and say in connexion with this, "Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord, and seek the Lord of Hosts," they should rather be induced on that account each of them to say, "I will go also."

Whatever imperfections and evils we may be called to forbear, and many indeed they are, avowed opposition to the laws

of Christ, whatever may be the cause of it, can be none of these. This would be to set aside in some degree the infallible standard which God hath given us, showing us how we ought to walk and to please him, and we should thus leave ourselves without any other guide than our own fallible and erring judgment of the real character of professors, which in many cases is known only to the Searcher of hearts; and though it were perfectly known to us, could give us no authority in any one instance to depart from the rule of the Word of God.

Without seeking after matters of forbearance unknown under that name to the first Christians, we shall have enough to do, if, in the true spirit of Christianity, we bear with the deficiency of our brethren as to their knowledge of the truth itself, their natural and moral infirmities, their mistaken scruples of conscience, their ignorance of many things clearly revealed in the Word of God, and the difficulty of communicating farther instruction—if upon all occasions we exercise towards them lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, non-resistance of evil, patience, and forgiveness—if we mortify every hurtful passion—and if we endeavour to imitate the forbearance of God—though we should consider the law of Christ as inviolable, and revere the greatest and the least of his commandments.

I have stated every thing which appears to me, and perhaps more than really is necessary, on the controverted subject of forbearance; and I now ask permission to give some friendly cautions to those who may have been stumbled by the arguments to which I have now replied.

First, I would entreat such to consider that, in all departures from the precepts and examples contained in the New Testament with respect to positive institutions, which have not only no moral obligation, but no existence, aside from the will of the great Institutor, there is a fatal progress.

When they began to plead for the presence of an elder not being necessary in the due administration of the Lord's Supper, was it conceived that any other person would go so far as to maintain that *two* believers, meeting either statedly or occasionally, might lawfully partake of that ordinance, and that these two might be *females?* Was it imagined that the same arguments which led many to this conclusion would at last embolden some of them to assert, with the utmost confidence, that *one* solitary disciple has a right to eat the Lord's Supper, not merely on the first day of the week, but at any time he pleases, provided he attend to it in a proper spirit? Was it within their contemplation that some would absolutely deny that there is now any use for elders, or any warrant for appointing

them in churches, though the same persons admit that there was such an office in the days of the Apostles? Or was it at all foreseen that they would now have so faint an impression of the obligation of all Christian duties, which depend solely on the will of the Divine Lawgiver, as to make the whole of them matters of forbearance?

It is not for me to say how much farther such loose principles may be carried. But certainly it is time for persons who in any degree are infected with them, to consider their ways, and particularly to think whether there be not some reason to suspect that, in a general point of view, the authority of God in the Scriptures weighs less with them than it formerly did; and whether, by proceeding in the same course, they will not be exposed to the danger of apostatizing from the Christian faith. They who are humble, and of a contrite spirit, and who tremble at the Word of God, will venerate all that bears the stamp of his authority—that which is morally binding in its own nature, and that which is *made such* by the revelation of his sovereign will.

Second, Offences against the law of love are not among the things which my opponents deem forbearable. By these I do not understand every thing which displeases and offends us, or mere deficiencies in the exercise of love, but real injuries, and evident transgressions of God's law. They are right in considering these as faults which are not to be forgiven to the extent of confirming our love towards the offender, without repentance.

Does it not then occur to them, that at least we ought to be as much offended when the sin is immediately against God, and equally disposed, in the sense here intended, not to forgive our brother unless he repent? Shall we who are conscious of much sin in ourselves, demand satisfaction from a brother for injuries done to us, and ask nothing of the kind when he sins against God only; but, on the contrary, give him a license to act opposite to the acknowledged laws of Christ? In some cases, ignorance is the cause; in others, much aversion and contempt; in a third class, a fear of the reproach of men; and in all, great inattention to the Word of God, in which his will is plainly revealed. Do not these things offend God? And shall we treat them as matters of indifference, while we make offences against ourselves a ground of serious dealing, and of exclusion from a church of Christ?

I may be permitted here also, to object against confining the law of discipline, Matt. xviii., entirely to personal offences, as has been done. That it does refer to these, I readily admit; but that other cases fall under it also, there is no reason to doubt. Every private sin known, or thought to be known, only

to an individual brother, ought to be treated in the same way, because love dictates this, and the spirit of the whole procedure in Matt. xviii., is that of love.

This is one conclusive argument against intimating the faults of brethren to all the world, whether they be ultimately penitent or impenitent; for this cannot be known till they hear or "neglect to hear the church." Nay, even when the sin is public and notorious, and cannot be finally settled in private, love requires that some one, in the first instance, should give a private admonition; or, at any rate, that intimation should be made to the offender before his case be made known to the church.

Third, There is a deception in all reasoning about that sort of forbearance which is now sought to be established by those I am opposing. They do not think that it strikes at Christian unity, or that it tends to lessen the importance of Divine ordinances, or to make those who understand the order of New Testament churches, less strict in observing it. On the contrary, they are persuaded that it is essential to the promoting of unity, and that those who forbear the neglect of Divine ordinances, and those who cannot do this, are equally disposed in all respects to pay a conscientious regard to them.

Now, when I say that I believe them to be sincere in all this, they ought to admit that I have some forbearance, for without it there could be no such concession. As for myself, I am willing to allow that all the things which I profess to forbear, appear to me of far less importance than those which I conceive to be un-forbearable, and that my conscience would be much more deeply affected by transgressing in the latter, than in the former case. Is it not so in other matters? A father knows that he cannot make his children perfect; but were he much disposed to favour the opposite principle, this could only tend to make them more imperfect. If he pay proper attention to the duty of bringing them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, he must draw a line of distinction between bearable and unbearable faults. Is it possible that he can have the same idea of the importance of each of these, or that he can be equally careful to avoid, in his own conduct, that which he reckons a matter of forbearance, and that which he would severely punish in his children? It cannot be, nor will any thing of the same kind ever take place in churches; their attempts to produce it may be faithful, and sincere, and zealously exerted, but they will be utterly vain and fruitless.

With respect to the promoting of unity, and putting an end to the existing divisions among the people of God, by bringing some of all classes into one church, I have no idea that this

would answer the end. Were they to succeed in collecting a great number, which seems doubtful, would there be any more real unity than there was before? Would not this rather be opening a wide door for the introduction of disputes and wranglings, while each would be pleading the rights of conscience, adhering to his own way, and censuring those who differed from him?

I can see how a mixed numerous body may subsist without any actual breach among them, when those of them who wish to follow the plan of New Testament churches yield their own principles, and when the things which concern the church are not seriously treated as matters of conscience. But when there are various and discordant parties, all determined to follow the light of their own consciences, there seems no rational probability that they will keep together, far less that Christian unity can prevail among them.

In all cases there must be great imperfection in that unity which ought to subsist, and much occasion for the exercise of real long-suffering and forbearance in our endeavours to maintain it. We have little need therefore of churches established on the very principle of tolerating internal schisms.

Some of my expressions may appear uncharitable, though I am conscious of no irritation, nor of a wish to exaggerate; and, if I have freely censured some of the tenets of my opponents, I have not inconsistently connected this with professing to forbear them. The matters of difference which I cannot agree with them to forbear, must appear of less importance to them than to me. Perhaps I forbear other things as great in my view as those are in theirs.

I am anxious to have it fully understood, that the difference in question respects only the obligation to regulate the worship, order, and government of churches by the precepts and examples of the New Testament, from which arises this controversy about the *nature* of Christian forbearance. They have no just idea of the ground of difference betwixt me and my opponents, who imagine that they have espoused the cause of forbearance, and that I have dared to oppose it. We differ not about the excellence, or the obligation, or the *extent* of a most amiable Christian virtue, but solely respecting *what it is*; and particularly *whether permitting our brethren to disobey the laws of God be that forbearance which he hath enjoined.*

The candid reader must have observed, that my aim throughout the discussion of this question, has been to exhibit what is really the doctrine of the Word of God respecting the duty of forbearance, and to show that there are no grounds whatever for the application of that term to the laws and ordinances of

Christ; and that, as in the present case, when the Scriptures are misunderstood, and a theory endeavoured to be established upon them, it follows, as an inevitable consequence, that such a theory must be false. When it is considered how ready our pride of understanding and self-esteem are to be enlisted in upholding principles we may have espoused and advocated, how unwilling we are in that case to relinquish them, it ought to make us cautious in embracing sentiments which rest on any thing short of the clear and express declarations of the Word of God.

And I would also guard my readers against a disputatious disposition; for there are some so fond of controversy, that they are never happy except when disputing on difficult subjects, or employed in making simple expressions dark and dubious. If they can strike out any thing new, they are just in their element; their favourite point is forbearance, and they will reason upon it, or at least hazard one bold assertion after another, till their opponents are completely tired; and convinced that much disputation, were it even about the Gospel itself, if it do not begin with vain jangling, is sure to end with it, and that perpetual disputes are not favourable to godliness.

And further, let my opponents seriously ask themselves what service they can do to the cause of Christ by calumniating some of those who are endeavouring, though with much imperfection, to keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus, and how extremely inconsistent this is with the strongest professions of forbearance, and with the heavy complaint made against all individuals and churches who oppose their favourite scheme, as if they were totally destitute of that Christian virtue. The beam, I am afraid, must be cast out, before they can see clearly to pull out the mote.

Finally, let every one beware of falling into the same spirit, by indulging resentment towards their accusers, treating them with asperity, or intermeddling with their affairs. "To their own master they stand or fall." We shall act suitably to what we profess, if we bear injuries with patience, "not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing; but contrariwise, blessing, knowing that we are thereunto called, that we should inherit a blessing."

This is a most essential part of that forbearance which God approves; and they only who exemplify it in this particular, and in others of a similar description, have a right to think that they really do espouse its neglected cause.

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REMARKS ON A SERMON,

ENTITLED, "THE JOY OF PARENTS IN WISE CHILDREN." BY THE REV. GEORGE LAWSON, MINISTER OF THE ASSOCIATE CONGREGATION IN SELKIRK.

We have not the pleasure of any personal acquaintance with this author; but we know that his character and abilities are extremely respectable. We have also perused with satisfaction many parts of a former work by him, respecting the power of the civil magistrate in religion. We sat down, in consequence of this, to the present discourse, with strong prepossessions in his favour. Let it not then be imputed to the force of prejudice, but to the love of truth, if we find ourselves obliged, amidst our approbation of many things, to express our dissent from certain passages in the sermon, and to set forth, at same time, the momentous nature of our difference.

We request the author, and the readers of the sermon, and our own readers also, to give no regard to any thing which we have to advance but in so far as that shall accord with the sacred Word of God, and those portions of it which we shall produce, in direct contradiction, as we think, to doctrines at the very threshold of the author's discourse.

These, we doubt not, and the remarks in general which we have to make, may extend to a greater length than we could wish, or think fit for the review of a single sermon; but the subject appears to us interesting in no ordinary degree.

The subjects considered by the author are, "I. Who is the righteous and wise son? II. The joy of parents in a righteous and wise son. III. The reason why Solomon so often speaks of the joy of parents in the wisdom and good behaviour of their children." On each of these he makes very pertinent and edifying remarks; and his ardent desire to be useful to the rising generation, is conspicuous throughout the whole sermon.

So far as it has that tendency, it will most certainly be approved of by every lover of the Gospel, and of mankind. No service of which we are capable, can more promote the happiness of society, and the prosperity of the kingdom of Christ, than the education of children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. It is matter of thanksgiving and joy to see persons at present contributing their best endeavours to second the efforts of godly parents, to supply the deficiency of such as are careless and inattentive, and to counteract, as far as possible, the fatal effects which often proceed from the bad instruction and the worse example of wicked parents.

We beg leave, however, to lay before the readers of the sermon one of its first principles, which seems to us opposite to the doctrine of the Gospel. After premising with great propriety, that "if we keep up the forms of religion merely to please men, we cannot expect acceptance from the Most High," the author proceeds thus: "Yet those are in a more hopeful condition who practise religion to please those whom they ought to please, than persons who regard men as little as they fear God; and choose rather to be openly profane in their conduct, by gratifying their own corrupt inclinations, than to gratify their parents and friends by a decent behaviour, and a regular observation of the ordinances of religion. Those who seldom or never read the Bible, or pray, or hear the word of God, are open despisers of God, as well as of those, whether teachers or parents, who endeavour to awaken a sense of everlasting things in their souls. But young persons, who, from respect to their parents or teachers, observe those institutions, may probably one day be effectually persuaded to turn from their sins unto God by Christ. The word which they read and hear, may become in their souls a seed of eternal life. The thoughts excited in their hearts by their own prayers may be blessed of God, as means of sincere impressions that will never be effaced." He maintains the same doctrine towards the conclusion:—"But the diligent use of the means of grace, with a decent outward behaviour, will give unspeakable joy to your parents. They cannot judge of your state before God by any other means, but by that kind of behaviour which is always the effect of converting grace, and often an introduction to it. The sight of your good conduct will persuade them, that you either are already true Christians, or that you will in all probability be made partakers of the grace of God in some future part of your life. If you deny them this pleasure, what shall I say of you? You are undoubtedly destitute of natural affection, of gratitude, and of every amiable and endearing quality. Were you not worse than

heathens, would you rather consume the days of your parents in anxiety, than rejoice their hearts, by doing what your own interest still more than their comfort requires?"

Is it then the duty of persons who have no religion, in order to please their relations, or their teachers, to put on the outward appearance of it? The position, surely, is diametrically opposite to the genuine influence of the Gospel, to every thing that is taught in the Scriptures with respect to religion, and even to common honesty and uprightness among men. Yet we are persuaded that something of this kind is too generally received among some who are reckoned strictly orthodox; though we have not often seen in the writings of Calvinistic authors, such an open and undisguised avowal of Arminian sentiments as in this sermon. Mr L. has not produced any part of the Word of God to establish these positions, but many texts may be brought to confute them. We beg leave to submit a few of these for serious consideration.

There was a sect among the Jews, in the days of our Lord, who "thanked God that they were not as other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as the publicans. They fasted twice in the week; they gave tithes of all that they possessed;" they were in appearance exceedingly devout, and they were scrupulously attentive to outward forms. What does Christ say to these men? "Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, "This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." Or, as the translators have rendered the passage in Isaiah xxix. 13, "Their fear towards me is taught by the precepts of men." The Pharisees, notwithstanding their high pretensions to sanctity, were precisely such persons as Mr L. declares to be "in a hopeful condition." "They were not truly religious; God had not created in them a new heart, nor renewed a right spirit within them." "Christ knew them that they had not the love of God in them. While they paid tithes of mint, anise, and cummin, they omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith." He therefore pronounced them "blind guides, who strained at a gnat and swallowed a camel," concluding a long catalogue of woes in Matt. xxiii., with these awful words, "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?"

As those whom Mr L. deems in a more hopeful condition than others, resemble the Pharisees in their attention to outward forms, and in their real state before God; so they also resemble them in one of the leading motives from which all

their religious conduct is supposed by him to proceed. "They practise religion to please them whom they ought to please;" that is, "their parents or teachers." In like manner, the Pharisees "did all their works to be seen of men, that they might have glory of men: they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God." And they actually obtained the praise of men; for our Lord says, "they have their reward." They were in high estimation with a deluded multitude, who thought, as they did, that religion consisted merely in a punctual observance of the ordinances of the law of Moses, though the persons thus employed were, many of them, destitute of faith, mercy, and the love of God. Nay, Mr L., in this respect, goes beyond even the Pharisees themselves, for he considers those who practise religion merely to please their parents, as some way in a hopeful state; but the hopes of the Pharisees were founded on the belief of being already possessed of the love and fear of God. They said that God was their Father. They boasted of their relation to him, and of their zeal for the honour of his law. It cannot be supposed, therefore, that they would consider any person as in a hopeful state, who had no religion except what he assumed in order to please his parents. Our Lord, however, charges them with teaching for doctrines the commandments of men, or having their fear towards God taught by the precepts of men. By which we are to understand not only that they were subject to human influence in the things of God, but that they added many things to the Divine law, for which they had no better authority than the tradition of their fathers. This we see they actually did; and there is no doubt that the same practice will in general be pursued by all who plead for a mere outward show of religion.

It must surely be admitted, that "having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof," is a high aggravation of the guilt of those persons who are represented, 2 Tim. iii. 1—6, as practising all manner of wickedness, under a false profession of Christianity. How then, can it be supposed, that having such a form, renders them in any respect better than if they wanted it? It is true, it may be said, that the persons condemned in the above passage, not only denied the power of godliness, but indulged themselves in all manner of open profaneness and iniquity; whereas Mr L. requires children "to gratify their parents and friends by a decent behaviour," as well as "a regular observation of the ordinances of religion." It seems very improbable, however, that persons who are so much lost to every principle of sincerity and uprightness, as to put on a cloak of religion with a view to please their friends, will follow a decent line of conduct in all other respects. It is

certain that no such thing is supposed in the Word of God: false professors of Christianity are therein uniformly represented as acting in direct opposition to all that they profess, if their profession itself be good. But though it were otherwise in some cases, is there no crime in hypocrisy and deceit? Is not the guilt of such conduct highly aggravated, when it takes place in the concerns of religion? Does it not then become a solemn mockery of the Most High? What would Mr Lawson think of a person who should teach children to lie, in order to please such parents as wish them to do so, when it suits their worldly interest? He would consider this as most iniquitous conduct; yet we conceive that no falsehood which can be uttered, is of equal enormity to that train of hypocritical formality which he has enjoined.

But he recommends the cultivation of this form of godliness by another motive. "Those (says he) who observe the institutions of reading the Bible, prayer, &c., may probably one day be effectually persuaded to turn from their sins unto God by Christ." He mentions also a "kind of behaviour which is always the effect of converting grace, and often an introduction to it." "The sight of your good conduct, (says he,) will persuade your parents that you are either already true Christians, or that you will in all probability be made partakers of the grace of God in some future part of your life." Is it possible that Mr L. can suppose that gross hypocrisy has any tendency to introduce men to converting grace? Although he had proposed nothing but good works, to be performed with simplicity and godly sincerity, does he imagine that such conduct, were sinners capable of it in their natural state, would procure for them, or lead them to trust in, the grace of God? Then, salvation is no more of grace, and Christ came only to call the righteous to repentance; though some are compelled to smite on their breasts, and to say, Lord be merciful to us sinners! Those who consider good conduct on the part of the creature as an introduction to converting grace, or as affording any probability that persons will afterwards be made partakers of the grace of God, misunderstand the nature of that grace which is revealed in the Gospel. It is free favour to the utterly worthless; sovereign, distinguishing, boundless grace, which has no respect to any thing in its objects, but their complete misery and wretchedness. Thus the Apostle Paul, after giving a most awful and melancholy account of the former state of the Ephesians, says to them, "But God who is rich in mercy, for the great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ—that in the ages to come, he might show the exceeding riches of his grace,

in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast." This is truly the Gospel, and there is no doctrine which differs from it, that deserves the name of glad tidings to guilty perishing sinners.

But Mr L. considers "those who practise religion to please their parents, as in a more hopeful condition than persons who are openly profane in their conduct." Far be it from us to plead the cause of open profaneness, or to say any thing that would have the smallest tendency to weaken the obligation which lies upon Christian parents, to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, or even to prevent them from being riotous or unruly. We may, however, be permitted to say, that neither the self-righteous, nor the openly profane, are in a hopeful condition. Nothing can be more certain, than that both are "in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity." It is not always easy to determine which of two moral evils is the greatest. We forbear therefore to form any estimate of the comparative guilt of these two classes. But with respect to "the probability of their being made partakers of the grace of God," we cannot hesitate to affirm the very reverse of what has been stated by Mr Lawson; for Christ says to the Pharisees—men who, according to the world's reckoning, were generally decent in their conduct, or as Paul expresses it, "concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless;" men who fasted, prayed, paid tithes, and went all the round of outward devotional duties—"The publicans, and the harlots enter into the kingdom of God before you. For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not; but the publicans and the harlots believed him. And ye, when ye had seen it, *repented not afterwards*, that ye might believe him." The same thing is declared in Rom. ix. 30, to the end; in connexion with which, read the following chapter, and hearken to the voice of him who saith, chap. ix. 15, 16, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." Observe also, the conclusion which the Apostle draws from this, "So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God who showeth mercy."

When persons in an unconverted state are told, that their attention to religious duties renders their condition more hopeful, and that their good conduct makes it probable that at some future period they will be made partakers of the grace of God; such doctrine can have no other tendency than to lead them to found their hope on their own good works, or devotional duties.

Those who admit in its full extent the account which is given us in the Scriptures, of the total corruption of human nature, will perceive that Mr L.'s plan is morally impossible. Can he who hates the Gospel desire to believe it, or can he pray to God that he may enlighten him in the knowledge of that truth which is foolishness to him, and which opposes all his darling lusts? Is it possible, that any one who is at present a lover of sin, can wish or intend to repent and be converted at a future period; or that the forsaking afterwards of all that is now dear to him, can be the object of his hope and desire? Either his love to sin is so great, that he has no proper conviction of the evil of it, and no wish to be delivered from it, though he may earnestly desire to escape the punishment due to his sin; or the spirit of the truth has already in some measure convinced him of sin; which is an essential part of true religion, and therefore does not apply to those who are religious only with a view to please their friends. Nothing can be more opposite to the very constitution of human nature, than the supposition that a person may sincerely desire the accomplishment of an event which of all things in the world he most abhors: and perhaps there are none who have a greater dislike to the practice of true Christianity, than some of those who intentionally put on a false appearance of it.

What then? It may be said, Must unconverted sinners be left to perish in their iniquities? Are no means to be used for their recovery? Ought not Christian parents to be solicitous about the eternal salvation of their children? Is it not their bounden duty to "bring them up in the admonition of the Lord: to teach them from their childhood the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make them wise unto salvation;" and to give them an example in their own conduct, of that sobriety, righteousness, and godliness, which all who believe the Gospel are taught to practise? Most certainly. And parents who neglect these important duties, will have much to answer for; the blood of their own children may be required at their hand. But the matter under consideration at present is, Whether shall parents teach their children true religion, or a false and hypocritical profession of it? They are not only bound to teach them all the doctrines and duties of Christianity, so far as man is capable of this, but to bring these things home to their consciences, as matters in which they are most deeply interested; telling them plainly that they are sinners, that they need salvation, and that it can only be obtained through the blood of Christ. Children ought to be led also to consider the practical influence of the truth: that the Word of God, when it is received, must necessarily comfort, sanctify, and bring

forth fruit, and that every profession of faith in Christ, when these effects are not produced, is vain and hypocritical. And without all doubt they ought to be instructed to read the Word of God, and regularly to attend public worship; for "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." At the same time, it is the indispensable duty of parents to teach their children, that a mere outward form of religion is unavailing in the sight of God, and that nothing is more hateful to him than hypocrisy and deceit. A father, instead of being gratified by seeing his children follow the plan recommended to them by Mr Lawson, should consider this as one of the greatest evils that could have befallen them; he should lament it before God; nor should he cherish or acknowledge any appearance of religion in them, produced by such principles.

Mr L. pleads for "a regular observation of the ordinances of religion," as the means of conversion. Does he include the ordinance of the Lord's Supper? This ordinance is plainly intended for those only who are already converted; for Christ says to those who are entitled to partake of it, "This is my body which is broken for you;" and this solemn ordinance is profaned when it is kept by hypocrites and unbelievers. Nay, even believers themselves may "eat the bread, and drink the cup of the Lord unworthily, and thus eat and drink judgment to themselves, not discerning the Lord's body." Can we suppose, then, that a person is using proper means for his own conversion, when he profanes the ordinances of the Lord, and thus exposes himself to the righteous judgment of "our God," who "is a consuming fire?" Unconverted persons ought to be cautiously instructed even with respect to the ordinance of prayer. It is certainly the duty of all the rational creatures of God to pray to him, and to praise him. "But without faith it is impossible to please him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them who diligently seek him." And when the Apostle Peter commanded a person who was "in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity," to pray, he commanded him at the same time to repent. "Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of thine heart be forgiven thee." This repentance includes in it faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, through whom alone sinful men can have access to the living God. And therefore, every exhortation to pray, when it is addressed to unconverted sinners, ought to be accompanied with an exhortation (either express or implied) to repent, and believe the Gospel. Parents who teach their children merely to repeat a form of words, and call this prayer, and "saying their prayers," &c., do nothing more than teach them a form of godliness. They ought rather to

instruct them concerning the nature of prayer, their own guilty and destitute situation, and the fulness which is treasured up in Christ to supply the wants of perishing sinners; and to encourage them to express the real desires of their souls to the great and merciful hearer of prayer, in the way that he hath appointed. By following a plan of this kind, which we cannot enlarge upon at present, they will, at least, have the consolation of reflecting, if their children should not become real believers of the Gospel, that they have conscientiously used their utmost endeavours to make them truly religious, and to prevent them from assuming the most odious character among men, that of religious hypocrites.

Let not what has been said, lead any person to suppose that Christian parents should use no means to produce in their children that sort of decent behaviour which renders young persons respectable members of society. Mr L. might have said more upon this subject. In relation to this, Christian parents have much in their power; and they ought to consider themselves as under an obligation not only to teach their children whatever is good and praiseworthy, but to watch over their conduct, to prevent them from falling into bad company, to exercise over them a constant, gentle, but absolute authority, and to train them up in habits of virtue, industry, and sobriety. A great deal is said on this subject in the book of Proverbs, and much encouragement and hope of success is given to diligent and conscientious parents in such labours. But they ought never in any case to give the smallest countenance to insincerity in their children, nor to palliate or excuse it in any respect whatever, though it should arise from the most trifling occurrences, and be perfectly innocent in its effects. And they ought to distinguish in a clear and pointed manner, between their good behaviour as members of society, and what is generally and properly called religion. The former is often exhibited when the persons who exemplify it are ignorant of the Gospel, and strangers to the grace of God. The latter, (true religion we mean,) can only be the effect of Divine and supernatural influence. Parental authority, therefore, may produce the most salutary effects in the one case, but it avails nothing in the other. Parents have no dominion over the consciences of their children, nor any right either to command or to persuade them to profess the faith and hope of the Gospel, till they appear to be taught of God. All that they can lawfully do in this case is, to use the means of instruction, and to pray to God for his blessing on their endeavours. Let them also pray that the God of truth may prevent them from teaching their children such doctrine as has a direct tendency to make them hypocrites.

Some may think that we have expressed ourselves rather strongly on this subject; but it is one of that importance that we consider it right to do so, especially when situations such as that held by the author—who is much respected as divinity tutor to the students for the ministry among the Burgher Seceders—tend to give currency to such opinions. We entertain not the smallest dislike towards him, but, on the contrary, believe him on many accounts most worthy of esteem, and will very readily give him an opportunity of making any explanations which he may think proper upon the subject.

[To the above review Mr Lawson made a lengthened reply, in which he endeavours to vindicate the sentiments contained in his sermon;* and what follows is a further elucidation of the doctrine and principles brought forward in the review, with some animadversions upon his defence.]

In Mr L.'s defence of what he has written, he has not taken the smallest notice of the arguments against his doctrine, from our Lord's description and condemnation of the Pharisees; from Paul's account of those who have a form of godliness, but deny the power thereof; from several passages of Scripture, which show that good conduct never procured converting grace; and from other passages, which clearly prove that those who are most employed in outward forms of religion from false principles, are not in general more likely to enter into the kingdom of God than other men; and that salvation being of God who showeth mercy, is opposed to its being of him that willeth, or of him that runneth. Nor has he attempted to say any thing, in reply to our remarks on "the impossibility of those who hate the Gospel desiring to believe it, or praying to God to enlighten them in the knowledge of that truth which is foolishness to them, and which opposes all their darling lusts:" for though he adverts to this, it appears that he does not understand it. He has also neglected to show, that we are mistaken in what we have advanced respecting the manner in which unconverted persons ought to be called upon to present their supplications before God. Thus it appears, that he has passed over in silence most of the arguments which have been urged against his doctrine; nay, however strange it may appear, the fact is, that he has not fairly met and combated any of one them. His defence, though in some respects ably written, we cannot help saying, appears to us to consist principally of evasive arguments, contradictory

* See Quarterly Mag. for 1798, Vol. I. p. 289.

assertions, and some unsuccessful attempts to show that we have misrepresented him.

Though we might rest the controversy here, we rather choose to proceed; and shall now make some additional observations, which are intended both for the purpose of elucidating our real sentiments, and of establishing and confirming the important doctrine maintained in the review.

1. It is necessary to explain our sentiments more fully with respect to the means which God hath appointed for the conversion of sinners. We have not then affirmed, as Mr L. would insinuate, that persons who never hear the Word of God, are as likely to be converted as those who do hear it, for this would be to deny that "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God;" a text which we formerly quoted as a strong argument for teaching children to read the Word of God, and regularly to attend public worship. Nor did we at all conceive that the persons whom he considers as in a peculiarly hopeless condition, would never hear the Gospel. It was saying the worst that could be said of them, when they were classed with publicans and harlots; yet these gave more ear to the doctrine of John the Baptist and of Christ, than others did who were outwardly decent and religious. But the generality of those whom Mr L. places at so great a distance from salvation, are indeed careless sinners, who have no concern about religion, but are not more immoral in their conduct, nor more averse to the doctrine of Christ, than many of those hypocritical professors, of whom he entertains better hopes.

We strongly plead for the necessity of the means of grace. We maintain that sinners ought to be induced by every consideration, except those which are sinful, to search the Scriptures, to examine the evidence of the truth of the Gospel, to believe it, to seek the Lord, and to call upon his name. And, for these purposes, every motive of hope and fear that can affect the human soul, ought to be set before them; such as, their guilt and danger, the certainty of punishment, the impossibility of their doing any thing for their own recovery, the freedom and suitableness of that salvation which is proclaimed to sinners in the Gospel, the greatness of the love of God in Christ Jesus, and the blessedness of enjoying peace with God, and the hope of eternal life. By such means as these, the servants of God, who invite the poorest wretches to partake of the Gospel-feast, are instructed to *compel* them to come in from the highways and hedges, where they perish with hunger, and cold, and nakedness, that the house of their bountiful Benefactor may be filled. But the motives of seeking to please men by a false profession of religion, and to place themselves

in a more hopeful condition with respect to conversion, by "a diligent use of the means of grace, and a decent outward behaviour," are sinful motives, and ought therefore to be discarded.

It is even a mistake to suppose, that we object to the strongest language that can be used in describing the effects which are produced by the Word of God, through the instrumentality of men. Not only are enlightened and faithful Christian teachers represented as *saving* themselves and their hearers, by the precious truths they declare; but a Christian brother, who is not a teacher, is supposed to "*convert* a sinner from the error of his way, to save a soul from death, and to hide a multitude of sins," James v. 20. Though these passages of Scripture seem principally to refer to the salvation of persons already converted to the faith of Christ, and to the recovery of the sheep of Christ who have strayed from his fold, we fully admit the principle also with respect to the same means "opening the eyes of men, and turning them from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God."

There is, however, some reason to doubt whether it can be said with propriety that sinners use these means, or that means are really used for the conversion of sinners, except by God himself, and by those who have tasted that he is gracious; if it be right to make any distinction between the use and the abuse of means. Reading and hearing the Scriptures are most undoubtedly means which God hath appointed for the salvation of lost sinners; and every one who lives by the faith of Christ, will be extremely solicitous that his fellow-sinners should be found in the use of them; and, at any rate, that they should have frequent opportunities of hearing the Word of God, however much indisposed they may be to listen to it as the means of their salvation. But when the means of grace are attended in a formal way, or from such motives as are recommended by Mr L., does not this abuse of them, far from being in its own nature an introduction to converting grace, incur the punishment which God has threatened to inflict on those who despise his grace? The means are good in themselves, and will assuredly prove effectual towards all those whom God hath ordained to eternal life; but none of them, after being brought to the knowledge of the truth by the almighty power of Jehovah, will see any cause to boast of the good use which they have made of the means of salvation, or to think that on this account they were made partakers of the grace of God. A proper use of the means of grace, is always the *effect* of grace in some measure already received, for which no reason can be given, but that "God will have mercy on whom he will have mercy."

2. We shall next consider the duties which are incumbent on men, while they are in a state of alienation from God.

A good deal of Mr Lawson's argument seems to proceed on this ground, that nothing is the duty of unconverted sinners which they cannot perform from natural principles; and therefore he seems to think it right to urge them to attend Divine ordinances, from such motives as usually animate the corrupt hearts of men. Without affirming positively that he holds this principle, we maintain that it is the duty of all men to "love God with all their heart, and soul, and strength, and mind, and their neighbour as themselves; for on these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." We know indeed from the Scriptures, and from experience, that men are unable thus to love God and their neighbour; but while the Divine law requires this perfect obedience, and threatens everlasting condemnation to all who come short of it, nothing can be more certain than that this is the duty of all men without exception. The obligation is not lessened by their inability, for this arises from the carnality and aversion of their own wicked hearts: "The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be," Rom. viii. 7. In like manner, they are indispensably bound by the commandment of the everlasting God, to believe on Christ for salvation, "to repent and be converted, and to turn from their wicked ways, and live." It is true the power of the Spirit of God is necessary, to effect such a wonderful change in the hearts of guilty men, but it does not on that account cease to be their duty, which could easily be proved from the Scriptures at large.

Now, surely it cannot be justly argued, because it is the duty of all men to repent and believe the Gospel, and to do works meet for repentance, that therefore unconverted sinners ought to put on a feigned appearance of performing these duties to please men, in the hope that, while they are so employed, God will bestow upon them converting grace. We confess indeed that many persons, both old and young, will be influenced by such motives in reading and hearing the Scriptures, in conversation, prayer, and other spiritual exercises, whatever may be said against it. But so much the more ought we to avoid teaching them that it is their duty, while it is indeed their sin, and a cause of the Lord's displeasure against them. Whatever may be their practice in relation to Divine ordinances, we cannot exhort them to observe these from such motives as have been just mentioned, nor from any other motive which does not include, or at least imply faith in Christ, as the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth; for we are

certain that no worshipper of any other description shall find acceptance with God.

3. It may be useful to enquire who are the persons whom we are warranted to consider as nearer the kingdom of God than others.

Let it be observed, that in stating our objections to Mr L.'s doctrine, we had no respect whatever to the concerns of this life, nor to that which may appear most amiable and praiseworthy in the eyes of worldly men, or most conducive to the interests of human society. We had nothing in view but the eternal salvation of the souls of men, what is good and evil in the sight of God, and what is declared in his Word concerning the manner in which he bestows his free and sovereign mercy on the fallen race of Adam. We admit that some of those young persons whom he describes, may be better members of society than the openly profane; and they certainly will be such, when they add to "the diligent use of the means of grace a decent outward behaviour," as he exhorts them. Yet there is no principle more debasing to the human mind, or which renders it more callous, or prepared to commit all manner of iniquity, than hypocrisy and false religion. It may therefore be expected, that others of them will manifest a degree of insincerity, covetousness, and pride, beyond the generality of irreligious men, and perhaps indulge themselves without remorse in some of the lusts of the flesh. We forbore to pronounce any decision with respect to the comparative guilt of the self-righteous and the profane. We only asserted, on the authority of him who knoweth what is in man, that "publicans and harlots enter into the kingdom of God before the self-righteous;" and on this ground opposed Mr L.'s assertion, which is the very reverse of this.

There may be persons of another description, who have a general conviction of the truth of Christianity, and a knowledge of its doctrines, obtained by education, and confirmed by their own examination of the Scriptures; though they are not taught of God to know the truth as it is in Jesus. They are not so much concerned about religion as to become eminently self-righteous; nor have they so little conscience about it as to imagine that there is any religion in observing Divine ordinances with a view to please men. But they observe these from a persuasion that it is their duty to God, and their moral character is decent and respectable. Though we would say to such persons, "except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish," yet we do not consider them as farther from the kingdom of God than the openly profane. Nothing, except hypocrisy and self-righteousness, can place a man at a greater distance from the

kingdom of God than avowed infidelity, and an unrestrained propensity to fulfil the lusts of the flesh; for these are strongholds which, in a very high degree, fortify the souls of men against the influence of the truth.

Mr L. writes in his sermon of some young persons who are represented as resembling the lawyer to whom our Lord said, "thou art not far from the kingdom of God." But on what ground was this said to him? Not because he practised religion to please men, but because he admitted the demands of the law in their full extent, the tendency of which was to convince him that he could not please God; and because he treated the Messiah of Israel with respect, as Nicodemus also did, who, though extremely ignorant of some things, seems to have been another who was not far from the kingdom of God. Mr L.'s general position, however, is incontrovertible, that "the state and condition of some sinners is worse than the condition of others, and that some, compared with others, are not far from the kingdom of God;" though in applying this doctrine to particular cases, it becomes us to speak modestly, except when they are positively decided in the Word of God.

4. Another argument from the Scriptures in confirmation of the very interesting doctrine which we have endeavoured to defend, shall conclude this part of the subject.

Mr L.'s sentiments are opposite to the leading features of the doctrine which was delivered by Jesus Christ and his Apostles. They never speak of such persons who he affirms are in a more hopeful condition than others, without the strongest marks of disapprobation. In none of their addresses to unconverted sinners, their warnings to flee from the wrath to come, their calls to faith and repentance, or their warm expostulations to bring sinners home to Christ, did they ever give such directions as those which Mr L. has given to young unregenerate persons. They declared to all men that they were in a lost and ruined situation as transgressors of the Divine law; they proclaimed the Gospel, or the glad tidings of salvation through Christ crucified, to all without distinction; and assured them of salvation in believing the truth. They uniformly represented conversion as the effect of the free and sovereign mercy of God, through the atonement of Christ, and never as the consequence of the devotional exercises and good conduct of unconverted sinners.

Much is said in the New Testament, of the dreadful wickedness of the first Christians before they believed the Gospel, but not a single word in commendation of the sobriety and good behaviour of any of them in their unconverted state; though it cannot reasonably be doubted that some of them were sober,

and performed many outward acts of devotion, before they knew the truth. Of this, indeed, we have complete evidence in 1 Cor. vi. 11, where, after the Apostle had enumerated many wicked characters, he says, "such were some of you," evidently implying that others of them had not been guilty of the same enormities. Yet none of them obtained mercy on that account; they were all "washed, and sanctified, and justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." This, we think, ought to satisfy every one who trembles at the Word of God, that there must be something palpably wrong in such a system of religion as Mr L. wishes to establish.

5. It is proper that we should rectify some mistakes in Mr Lawson's statement of the charges which we have brought against him.

We have not represented him as maintaining, that young persons who put on a form of religion, with a view to please their parents and teachers, are already accepted of God. On the contrary, we understood him in both the passages of his sermon, on which we took the liberty to animadvert, to be dealing with unconverted persons, whom he himself considers as in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity. Far less did we imagine, or in the smallest degree wish to make our readers conceive, that he had intentionally recommended a system of hypocrisy and lies. We are fully persuaded that, whenever his plan of educating young persons shall appear to him in that light, he will in the most public manner recant all that he has advanced in support of it.

Most readily do we also acknowledge that incidental expressions, which may seem exceptionable or ambiguous, ought to be explained by an author's own illustration of the subjects to which they relate, and by the general tenor of his writings. But we have taken no advantage of any unwary expressions in Mr L.'s sermon; two complete paragraphs were the subject of our animadversions, and there are many similar advices given to young persons throughout the sermon. No injustice, therefore, was done to him by understanding his words in their obvious and natural meaning; and he himself has confirmed the sense in which they were taken, for he avows the sentiments imputed to him, though he rejects the consequences which appear to us necessarily to result from such sentiments. He makes no apology for any of his expressions, except by admitting, in relation to one of them, that the "language is perhaps strong," while he affirms, at the same time, that "it is authorized by Scripture." He in the strongest manner justifies every syllable of what he has advanced, and therefore has no claim to indulgence with respect to his manner of expression.

In his defence, he labours to support his former opinion, that young persons ought to "practise religion to please their parents," and that those who do so, "are in a more hopeful condition than others." They may probably one day be effectually persuaded to turn from their sins unto God by Christ; their decent outward behaviour is often an introduction to converting grace; and their good conduct will persuade their parents that they will, in all probability, be made partakers of the grace of God, in some future period of their lives. Have we imputed to him any other sentiments than these? Is there any cause why he is so much offended, but our having condemned these sentiments? Nay, does not every one who reads his defence perceive, that he would have been still more displeased, if we had represented him as maintaining any opposite doctrine? He has written nearly as much as his whole sermon for the express purpose of defending it!

We are accused by Mr Lawson of having misrepresented his sentiments, but we shall presently show that this is not the case.

He expressly denies that "he has represented it to be the duty of persons who have no religion, to put on the appearance of it to please their parents, and that he teaches them to trust in such empty forms of religion." Yet in the very next paragraph, he admits that "he has said that attendance on religious ordinances by young persons to please their parents, is better than the neglect of them;" and he affirms that such persons, "compared with others, are not far from the kingdom of God." Is not this expressly advising them to put on a false appearance of religion in order to please men, and to trust in this empty form, as an evidence that they are not far from the kingdom of God?

But "he hath not taught them to trust in empty forms of religion," for "he hath said at the same time, that they cannot expect acceptance with God, unless they act on higher principles." That we may not seem to approve of this expression, let it be observed, that no actions, from whatever principles they may be performed, can be the foundation of a sinner's acceptance with God; for "a man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the law," Rom. iii. 28. But supposing Mr L. to have nothing more in view than to assert, as in the sermon, that "if we keep up the forms of religion merely to please men, we cannot expect acceptance from the Most High," without expressly declaring what is the ground of our acceptance in the sight of God; by what means will he prove the consistency of these two discordant sentiments—that those who have no religion, except what proceeds from a desire of pleasing men,

cannot find acceptance with God; and that it is the duty of young persons who are not truly religious, to practise the outward forms of religion in order to please men? We did him the justice to quote with marked approbation the introductory clause of his sermon, to which he now frequently resorts as his defence against all our censures; it will, however, avail him nothing to that end. He does not indeed propose to young persons a hypocritical profession of religion, as the ground of their acceptance with God; but he affirms that it renders their situation hopeful, and makes it likely that God will bestow upon them converting grace.

He challenges us for asserting, that "he commends a religion in children which is intended merely to please their parents," and quotes several passages of Scripture to show how absurd and how profane it would be to interpolate the word *merely*, as he alleges we have done in his case. He might easily have discerned, however, that we intended nothing more than to represent the religion which he commends, as proceeding from no higher motive than a desire to please men. The persons engaged in it may have other motives, but none of them can be spiritually good; for by Mr L.'s own confession, "they are not partakers of saving grace;" and the only motive to which, in his sermon, he attributes their conduct, is a desire to please their parents; while we have represented it as proceeding also from insincerity and self-righteousness. Why does he say, in the beginning of his sermon, "if we keep up the forms of religion merely to please men?" &c. Perhaps no one will avow that he does so, but this may be the ruling motive with thousands. Nay, in his defence, in the midst of a loud and bitter outcry against us in imputing this expression to him, he himself uses it! "But since a religion intended merely to please men, cannot please God, why do I urge children to practise religion from the regard they owe to their parents?"

But without any hesitation he frequently asserts the most opposite and irreconcilable things. He declares, that "he neither said nor meant that children should practise religion, merely to please their parents." And what other motive does he ascribe to them? "A human faith of the truth of religion," which he explains by adding, "that dutiful children are disposed to believe that what their parents tell them is true."* If this be any thing different from pleasing their parents, it is at

* Before it can be admitted, in an unqualified sense, that it is the duty of children to "believe that what their parents tell them is true," it must be proved that they tell them nothing but what is really so. And with respect to the truth of the Christian religion, Mr L. surely does not mean

least very nearly allied to it. Every candid person, therefore, will perceive, that, even though Mr L. himself had not used the word *merely*, our statement of his doctrine would have been perfectly just, and that there is no similarity between our use of the word, and his interpolating it in several Scripture texts, none of which teach children to practise religion in order to please their parents.

The following texts would have been more to the point than any that he has quoted : " The hypocrites love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men," Matt. vi. 5. " Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites; for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within, they are full of extortion and excess," Matt. xxiii. 25. " All their works they do to be seen of men," ver. 5.

It is still, if possible, more extraordinary that Mr L. should deny that he reckons those in a hopeful condition who are most attentive to his instructions. He asks, " What do you mean by this observation, or what meaning did you think that your readers would put upon that expression, a *hopeful condition?*" Would not all who read this suppose, that an expression so offensive to him was none of his, and that we had palmed it upon him; had they not seen it faithfully copied in our extract from the first page of his sermon? Are we then to understand, as he now affirms, that he did not mean to say that such persons are in a hopeful condition, or that he now retracts his former sentiment? By no means. He still maintains it in the most tenacious manner? But " he had said only that they were in a more hopeful condition than young profligates." And then he endeavours to show, from some Scripture texts, that one person may be in a more hopeful condition than another, while neither of them is in a hopeful state. The situation of the one, however, cannot be so desperate as that of the other; and therefore, in a comparative sense, it must be hopeful. This may be affirmed even of the fool mentioned by Solomon, in comparison of a man who is hasty in his words, or a man who is wise in his own conceit, unless we should suppose that the improvement of the understanding is attended with as great difficulty as the mortification of pride, anger, and other unruly passions. But Mr L. ought not to cavil in this manner; for the whole of his defence clearly shows that he entertains very considerable hopes, not indeed of

to say, that children ought to believe it on the authority of their parents, though there are multitudes of professing Christians who have no better foundation for their faith.

the present safety, but of the future conversion of those who practise the outward forms of religion from worldly motives.

We shall now reply more particularly to Mr L.'s arguments in support of his doctrine.

The Scripture passages which he quotes to exemplify the strong language of hope, have no connexion with the present subject. None of them hint at any such hope as a foundation for that which is proposed in the sermon; and we should have had no objection to the strong language used in the latter, had a sufficient ground been laid for it. Our hope with regard to the influence of the Word of God on particular persons, though apparently well founded, may be often disappointed, and God may speak to us on this subject, and on many others in the language of men, as he has often done, while no cause of triumph is given either to Arminians or infidels.

Mr L. asserts that Solomon teaches children "to practise religion from the regard they owe to their parents," in Prov. xxiii. 15, 16, 24, 25. From these verses it appears, (and who will deny it?) that the wisdom and righteousness of children are a source of great joy to their parents, and it will unquestionably be an addition to the happiness which children find in the ways of wisdom, when they perceive how much their conduct gratifies their parents. But when children put on the outward appearance of righteousness and wisdom, while they are known to be really destitute of both, nothing, we apprehend, is more likely to bring down the grey hairs of godly parents with sorrow to the grave. To make this, or the joy of angels, a motive to true repentance, we consider as harmless, though we doubt the efficacy of such motives. The fact is certain, that there is joy in heaven and earth over one sinner that repenteth, whether the foresight of it has any influence to produce repentance or not. But we may be perfectly assured, that there is no joy in heaven, and that there ought to be none on earth, over sinners who put on a feigned appearance of repentance, in order to please men.

Mr L.'s next authority is the practice of the Apostle Paul, who says, "I please all men in all things." Our readers will be pleased to recollect, that the question is not whether it be the duty of children to please their parents, of servants to please their masters, or of Christians to please all men in all things not inconsistent with their duty to God; for if it were, there could be no dispute. But the question is, whether it be the duty of any one to observe the solemn ordinances of Divine worship from the motive of pleasing men, while it is certain that he is not a believer of the Gospel, and therefore cannot please God; for without faith it is impossible to please him."

Mr L. maintains, that it is the duty of unconverted persons to please men, in the sense last mentioned; but in what respects he finds an example of this in the conduct of the Apostle Paul, it is not easy to conceive. Was Paul an unbeliever? Is it not manifest that a desire to please God was the governing motive of all his conduct, though he thereby incurred the hatred and contempt of men? We need not quote particular passages which show this; his writings are full of them; his whole history proves that there never was a person on earth, except his Lord and Master, who paid less regard to the approbation of men; and Mr L. himself quotes a remarkable saying of his, in which he flatly denies that he pleased men, and affirms that, if he did so, "he could not be the servant of Christ." It is enough for us at present to observe, that there is not a single instance on record of Paul doing any thing after his conversion with a view to please men, in which he did not also please God. Why then does Mr L. produce the example of Paul, which is as opposite to the principles and practice which he recommends to unconverted sinners, as light is to darkness?

Having made so little of Paul, he turns abruptly from him, and goes back to Moses, from whom he had more reason to expect some shadow of argument, as it may seem to inattentive readers, in support of his doctrine. Moses himself acted from the same principles by which the conduct of Paul was regulated, Heb. xi. 24—29. The nation of Israel, to whom he delivered the law, was however a nation of this world, a race of carnal men, though they were the peculiar people of God in a typical sense, to whom carnal ordinances alone were suited, and few of whom could worship God in spirit and in truth. Their obedience therefore to the letter of the law, which is all the obedience that was, or could be given by the generality of that people, must have been the effect, in part at least, of worldly motives, and of such principles as are natural to man. Accordingly they were encouraged to obey the God of their fathers, by promises of being blessed in their basket and in their store, of victory over their temporal enemies, and of a long and prosperous life in the land of promise. These, and suchlike, were the rewards that were promised them; and their law was also sanctioned by temporal curses; the capital punishment of death was inflicted for many crimes, and others of less magnitude were punished in exact proportion to their just demerit.

Is this the religion which Mr L. would have us to consider as forming a part of the religion of Christ, the antitype of Moses, by whom came grace and truth? Would he persuade us to return to these weak and beggarly elements, a yoke which neither the first Jewish converts to Christianity nor

their fathers were able to bear? Does he think himself warranted to make men Jews, in order that they may become Christians, though the New Testament plainly shows him, that, when the Gospel of Christ was first preached, it had no greater enemies than the Jews, who also crucified the Lord of glory, and pleased not God, and were contrary to all men?

Can any thing be more opposite to the Apostle Paul's description of a real Jew, than the outward and insincere religious character which Mr L. recommends! "He is not a Jew, says he," who is "one outwardly, neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly, and *circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit and not in the letter, whose praise is not of men, but of God*," Rom. ii. 28, 29. Those who highly venerate the letter of the Old Testament dispensation, without much regarding its spirit, would do well to attend to this text, which we earnestly recommend to Christian teachers as a directory never to be departed from, when they wish to describe true religion, or to urge it on the consciences either of converted or unconverted sinners.

Mr L., however, asserts that, "from the beginning to the end of the Bible, we find religion urged upon men by considerations not of a higher or nobler kind than that which Solomon urges in his text." That is, according to his explanation of the text, religion is urged upon them by the motive of pleasing men, and by other worldly considerations, such we suppose as he mentions in his sermon, that "religion tends to make us happy in this world. It procures a good name, which is better than gold and silver, and which is a mean of procuring gold and silver." Whatever Mr L.'s real sentiments may be, these words savour too much of an opinion which some held in the days of the Apostles, and which has been embraced by an innumerable multitude, since *the Man of Sin* began to reign, namely, "that gain is godliness." One would think from this, the procuring of gold and silver is stated as the principal thing; a good name conduces to that end; and in order to procure a good name, we must be religious. We are far from imputing these principles to Mr L., but his doctrine, we must say, tends to disseminate them.

He places "a concern for salvation" on the same footing with a desire in children to please their parents by performing outward acts of devotion. This we conceive to be a very great mistake; it almost totally confounds the distinction between the proud Pharisee and the self-condemned publican. Will he maintain that they who "were pricked in their hearts, and said, Men and brethren, what shall we do," and he who "sprang in and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, and

said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved," were not in a more hopeful condition than those who prayed that they might be seen of men? or that the latter were as much disposed to confess their sins unto him who is faithful and just to forgive them, as were the convicted Jews, and the trembling jailer? What does the event prove in relation to the state of this fact?

He says, further, "if you are right in this censure, the Missionary Societies are guilty of a great and pernicious error, in sending forth men to preach the Gospel, and in instructing their missionaries to gain the good-will of men, who cannot be moved by spiritual considerations." What sentiment have we advanced, from which it can be inferred that we disapprove of the most zealous exertions to call the attention of sinners to the glorious Gospel of Christ, by every lawful means? There is nothing unlawful surely, in endeavouring to gain the confidence and good-will of strangers; for it is the duty of Christians, in every situation, to "strive as much as lieth in them to live peaceably with all men." And more especially must they be called to this, when they go to proclaim the glad tidings of salvation to sinners ready to perish, who have never before had an opportunity of hearing the Gospel. They cannot fail to be exceedingly anxious that their fellow-sinners should repent and turn to God; and they know that this can only be effected by the Word of truth which they have gone to declare to them. But is there no difference between attempts to induce men to hear the Gospel, and using influence with them to put on a form of godliness, in order to please their parents or teachers? The former is absolutely necessary to salvation, for the Holy Spirit of God operates on the minds of men only by means of the truth; the latter aggravates the condemnation of poor sinners. The Lord promises that his blessing shall accompany his own Word, but no blessing is promised to those hypocrites, whose fear towards God is taught by the precepts of men.

We have a great respect for the memory of Dr Owen, and consider him as one who had an extensive knowledge of Divine truth. But both he and Mr L. seem to have forgotten themselves, when they affirm that "God stepped out of his way to save a persecuting Saul." There were very singular circumstances in the manner of Saul's conversion; but he himself represents it as "a pattern of all long-suffering to those who should hereafter believe on Christ to life everlasting;" and expressly affirms that "for this cause he obtained mercy," 1 Tim. i. 16. Blessed be God that this and many other examples of his infinite mercy to the greatest sinners, are recorded with such

precision, and such irresistible evidence, as makes them shine forth with unsullied splendour, amidst all the clouds which human ignorance has raised to darken them. Besides, Saul, in his unconverted state, was "instantly serving God day and night; he was zealous of the law," and strictly attended to all its ordinances, among which was the reading of the law and the prophets. How, then, according to Mr L.'s idea of this matter, could God be said to step out of his way to save Saul? Would it not have been more consistent with his sentiments, to have made this an instance of the Lord's ordinary way, who he says "honours his own institutions, by dispensing his saving grace to those who attend upon them?" He will doubtless perceive where this would land him.

In Mr L.'s defence, he endeavours to show the necessity of admitting that, when persons attend upon religious ordinances, "there is a probability at least of their deriving from them the advantage in question," otherwise they will cease to attend upon them; and he asks, "if we ever heard of a physician who urged his patient to use his medicines, but at the same time assured him, that the man was a liar who should tell him that they were likely to do him any good?" To which we reply,

"The advantage in question," namely converting grace, does not depend on attention to Divine ordinances from a desire to please men, though it cannot be obtained without hearing the Gospel, because the grace by which men are converted and saved, is therein revealed. This grace is altogether free and sovereign; no good conduct on the part of sinners can be an introduction to it, or the means of obtaining it; nor can it lay a just foundation to hope, that in some future part of their lives they will be made partakers of it, though Mr L. has affirmed all this. God may indeed save many of these formalists, at the very moment when they are profaning his ordinances by attending on them from the basest motives, in like manner as he converted Saul when he was breathing out threatenings and slaughter against his disciples, and by the irresistible power of his grace saved three thousand false worshippers in one day, and made even a great number of Jewish priests obedient to the faith. But none of these persons had any reason to hope that they were more likely to obtain salvation than other men, on account of their conduct in their unconverted state.

The encouragement which we propose to all our fellow-sinnners, without distinction, is not a mere peradventure, but an absolute certainty that "he that believeth shall be saved." We tell them that Jesus Christ the Son of God hath offered up the true atoning sacrifice; that God is well pleased; that he hath given the highest demonstration of this in the resur-

rection of Christ from the dead; that repentance and remission of sins are preached in his name to all nations, and to every creature of whatever rank, age, sex, or character; and that whosoever calleth on the name of the Lord shall be saved. This is the only medicine that can be of any service to a wounded soul; and we assure the diseased, that all who partake of it shall infallibly be cured. He deceives men, who would make them believe that a counterfeit medicine, or a mere pretence of taking the sovereign remedy, will prove beneficial to them. Did ever any physician give his patients hopes of being cured by his medicines, when he knew that they despised them, and that, while they professed veneration for him, they were actually regulated by the prescriptions of some unskilful person in whom they had greater confidence?

Mr L. imagines that we keep men at a distance from the Gospel, by teaching them that a hypocritical outward form of religion does not give them any reason to hope that they will be made partakers of saving grace. And, because we affirm that they expose themselves to an aggravation of punishment by profaning the ordinances of the Lord, therefore he says that we lead them to abstain from every religious exercise, to fulfil their lusts, and to make a near approach to the unpardonable sin; of the nature of which, however, he does not seem to have any just idea.

It is astonishing that he did not perceive that he was endeavouring to fix these horrid consequences on doctrine which is directly taken from the Word of God! When the Scripture says, that "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord; but the prayer of the upright is his delight;" does it prohibit the wicked from prayer? Is not this rather to be considered as a warning of their danger, and an incitement to repent, and to pray for forgiveness in God's appointed way? Jesus Christ condemned the hypocrisy of the Pharisees, and their manner of performing all their religious duties, their giving of alms, their fastings, their long prayers, and vain repetitions. All these were an abomination to the Lord, on account of the motives from which they were performed; and their leading motive was a desire to obtain the praise of men. Will Mr L., therefore, affirm that our blessed Lord forbade the Pharisees to give alms, to fast, and to pray?

We might multiply instances of this kind, but we shall only mention farther what Christ says with regard to the additional condemnation which men shall endure on account of their rejection of the Gospel. His words are, "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil," John iii. 19.

We beseech Mr L. to consider whether his doctrine has a tendency to bring men to the light, or to make them, in a great measure, pleased with their darkness; and whether the general strain of his argument, in the latter part of his defence, might not rather be expected from one who impugns the doctrine of Christ. That there is a peculiar danger in hearing and rejecting the Gospel, which is "the savour of life unto life, or the savour of death unto death;" and that a greater punishment awaits those who do not repent, cannot possibly be denied, without expressly contradicting the Word of God. Men ought to be aware of these things; and they are undoubtedly their best friends who endeavour to cut up by the roots all their false hopes, and who faithfully set life and death before them.

Mr. L. frequently supposes that religious duties and good works are performed by unconverted sinners, though he also admits, that "they can do no work that is spiritually good." Which of these ought to be considered as his real opinion, we cannot tell. But whatever may be his sentiments in relation to the good works of unregenerate persons, of whom the Scripture says, that "there is none that *doeth good*, no not one," he might have uniformly admitted, at least, that outward acts of devotion, performed with an eye to please men, and not proceeding from the love and fear of God, are none of these.

To his observations respecting regenerate persons, who are doubtful about the safety of their state, or the purity and spirituality of their motives in the service of God, we reply by asking him, if he will venture to affirm that any other persons than real believers, and those who worship God in spirit and in truth, are accepted of him? If not, then he is left in the same dilemma in which he would have us to be placed. Or does he mean to say, that when believers cannot worship God in a spiritual manner, they may do it without remorse in a carnal manner? They certainly ought never to cease from waiting upon God in his ordinances; for how else can they expect to be revived and made spiritual? But neither ought they to be satisfied with a mere bodily attendance, and an outward form. And to his question, how we, upon our principles, can command our dependents to walk in the way of the Lord, we reply, that it is not more difficult for us to instruct or command according to our principles, than it is for him to do so according to his. The difference between him and us respects the way of the Lord itself, and has no relation to teaching or commanding others to walk in it. We never imagined that Christian parents are not under an express obligation to command their children to read the Scriptures, and to attend to other means of religious instruction, both in public and private; however

much we may blame them for teaching their children, in opposition to the doctrine of the Scriptures, that it is their duty to be religious from worldly motives, and that they have reason to expect converting grace, in consequence of their devotional exercises and good behaviour.

It is not a sufficient argument against any doctrine, that it is liable to abuse; for *Divine truth* has been often abused, and made subservient to the lusts and corruptions of men. But that doctrine which, in its own nature, tends to foster the pride of men, and to lead them to place their confidence in their own righteousness, is not of God; and such, we apprehend, is the tendency of the doctrine which we have censured. Mr L. endeavours to retort this charge, on the groundless supposition that we set aside the means which God hath appointed for subduing the pride of the human heart. Had we really done so, the tendency of our doctrine would have been rather to promote the cause of infidelity, than to encourage pharisaical pride and self-righteousness. And though he had convicted us of so great a crime, of which he has completely failed, he could not thereby have freed himself from the charge of having recommended the religion of the Pharisees, to whom Christ said, "Ye are they who justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts; for that which is highly esteemed among men, is abomination in the sight of God," Luke xvi. 15.

Mr L. seems very much displeased with some persons, whom he stigmatizes as prejudiced, malicious, revilers of inspired men, disseminators of doctrine more mischievous than all the pestilent doctrines of the church of Rome; persons who have not seven devils (merely,) but devils with worse devils within them; who present to sinners the wine and milk of the Gospel, in a vessel burning hot with fire from hell; who teach men to throw off every restraint, to fulfil their lusts, and to commit the sin against the Holy Spirit!!! And he concludes with a woe to the teachers of lies, and another woe to the false answers of the teachers of truth. We charitably suppose that he does not intend to apply to us all these opprobrious epithets. But though he should intend this, as there is no argument in abusive language, and as it cannot hurt an opponent, especially when it ascribes to him such a complication of wicked principles and conduct as is probably not to be found in any one person, corrupt as human nature is; it does not merit a reply. Instead of rendering evil for evil, and railing for railing, we assure him that our remarks have been dictated by friendship to him, and to all who listen to his doctrine, and that we most sincerely wish his temporal and eternal happiness.

EXAMINATION OF MR FULLER'S TREATISE ON FAITH.

Mr Fuller has just published a Tract, entitled, "The Gospel worthy of all Acceptation;" "with an Appendix on the question, Whether the existence of any holy disposition of heart be necessary in order to believing in Christ?" I perfectly agree with this author in considering it as the duty of unconverted sinners to believe in Jesus Christ. In handling this subject, he has shown very considerable talents; and many of his arguments are scriptural and conclusive, except the doctrine contained in the Appendix. In it he has principally attacked Mr M'Lean, whose sentiments, with respect to the nature of faith, are the same with my own. I do not mean, however, to write in his defence. He is fully capable of defending himself, if he should so incline. I shall not, therefore, attempt any explanation of what he has written upon the subject, nor any exposure of the misrepresentations and false glosses imposed upon him, I hope not intentionally, by Mr Fuller. My design is, to throw out a few hints respecting the doctrine contained in the Appendix, as an antidote against its hurtful tendency, till a more full reply shall be written by one more competent for the task.

Mr F. endeavours to prove, that "holy dispositions of heart are necessary in order to believing in Christ;" * or that "faith in Christ is a persuasion influenced by the moral state of the heart, and partaking of it." † He farther affirms, that "whatever proves faith to be a duty, proves it to be a *holy* exercise of the soul towards Christ, arising from the heart being turned towards him." ‡ In this manner he openly and avowedly pleads for holy dispositions, as pre-requisites in order to fit a person for believing in Christ; and he makes faith itself, thus produced, a holy exercise of the soul. At the same time, he would persuade us, that he is a strenuous supporter of the freedom and sovereignty of Divine grace, and that the strange system which he wishes to establish, is alone consistent with the spotless purity of the law of God. On the contrary, it appears to me, that the leading tendency of the Appendix, whatever its author might design, is to confound faith and works, the law and the Gospel, Divine grace and human merit. These irre-

* Title-page. † Appendix, p. 171. ‡ Ibid.

concilable opposites are most carefully and accurately distinguished in the Word of God; and it is of the utmost consequence that the distinction should be clearly perceived, and steadily maintained, against all who would darken or impair it.

Allow me to make some remarks on the above description of faith.

1. The distinction between faith and works is thus marked by the Apostle Paul: "Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay; but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude, that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." * "Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." † "By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast." ‡ "But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident; for, The just shall live by faith. And the law is not of faith; but, The man that doeth them shall live in them." § In all these passages, and many others which might be mentioned, human works, including surely the good dispositions of heart from whence they flow, are entirely set aside in the matter of justification before God; while the grace of God, the righteousness of Christ, and faith in him as the Lord our righteousness, are set in opposition to all the works and holiness of men. In this point of view, the latter are represented as the ground of legal justification. But that justification which condemned criminals obtain, comes to them freely by the grace of God, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; and is enjoyed by faith, in opposition to all human works and merit. It is remarkable, that the Apostle does not merely affirm that we are saved or justified by grace alone, through Christ's obedience unto death; he very often contrasts with this the works of the law, to which all men naturally cleave as a foundation of hope, that he may the more effectually establish the one, and demolish the other. It was not enough for him to say, that "boasting is excluded by the law of faith;" he must also declare, that it is "not excluded by the law of works." He did not merely conclude that "a man is justified by faith;" but likewise added, "without the deeds of the law." He was not satisfied with affirming, that the people of God at Ephesus were "saved through faith, and that not of themselves, because it was the gift of God;" he reminded them also, that salvation

* Rom. iii. 27, 28.
† Rom. iv. 4, 5.
‡ Eph. ii. 8, 9.
§ Gal. iii. 11, 12.

was " not of works, lest any man should boast." The Scriptures uniformly treat the subject in the same style. And I would ask, is it consistent with such a clear and decided method of contrasting faith and works, to represent faith as " a holy exercise of the soul towards Christ, arising from the heart being turned towards him?" Many are the distinctions which have been made by Mr F., with an uncommon degree of penetration and acuteness. But he seems incapable of comprehending, or rather indisposed to admit, one of the clearest and most important distinctions which is any where to be met with in the Word of God; namely, that faith is not works, or that justification by faith is the very opposite of justification by the deeds of the law, which requires all holy dispositions and exercises of heart towards God, as well as perfect conformity to its precepts in the whole tenor of our lives. If holy dispositions of the heart be necessary in order to produce faith in Christ; if faith itself be a holy exercise of the soul towards Christ, arising from the heart being turned towards him; and if this be the faith which justifies, is it not manifest that we are justified by the deeds of the law? For what reason are good works not expressly mentioned in Mr F.'s description of faith, and of the source from which it springs? He knows well, surely, that holy conduct is the necessary and the immediate effect of holy dispositions and exercises of heart. Thus are sinners made debtors to do the whole law, in order to obtain the faith which justifies!

2. Mr F. has a subterfuge here, but it will yield him no shelter. He represents the doctrine which excludes our holiness from being necessary to our acceptance with God, under any consideration whatever, as founded, if he mistake not, only on the phraseology of a single passage of Scripture, Rom. iv. 4, 5. By *him that worketh not*, and the *ungodly* whom God justifieth, he does not understand " persons who at the time had *never done any good thing* in the sight of God, but persons who work not *with respect to justification*, and who, in their dealings with God for acceptance, come not as righteous, but as *ungodly*." " He that *worketh not*," says he, "is said at the same time to believe; but whenever this can be said of a man, it cannot with truth be affirmed of him that he hath done nothing good in the sight of God. It may, however, be truly affirmed of him, that he *worketh not with respect to justification;* for it is of the nature of faith to overlook and relinquish every thing of the kind."

Mr F. *certainly is mistaken* if he imagines that the justification of those who were ungodly till they were justified freely by the grace of God, is only revealed in Rom. iv. 4, 5. Several other texts, which explicitly declare the same truth, have been

already quoted; and these are only a sample of the uniform doctrine of the Scriptures in relation to it. But we must not conclude, it seems, that the persons denominated ungodly had "never done any good thing." They were believers, and therefore, "by the grace of God, had done what is right in giving credit to what God says." He never can want evidence that a believer has done good before he was justified; for if every thing else fail him, he produces faith itself as a good work, although the inspired writers repeatedly declare, that believing is not working, and that there is no unbeliever who doeth good; no, not one.

Let us now attend to his manner of attempting to reconcile all this with justification by grace. The holy person, whom he represents as being justified, worketh not *with respect to justification*, and the faith which he possesses, is "a holy exercise of his soul towards Christ, a persuasion influenced by the moral state of his heart, and partaking of it!" The Scriptures affirm that we are made righteous by Christ's obedience, and not by our own holiness; that we obtain an interest in what he hath done and suffered for sinners, or are actually "justified by faith, without the deeds of the law," which is precisely the same thing with "not working, but believing." Good works undoubtedly are performed by justified persons; but the Word of God no where affirms that they are justified by any of these. * It declares, however, that we are justified by faith; and were it true that holy dispositions precede faith, and that faith itself is a holy exercise of the soul, the conclusion would be inevitable, that we are justified by works. Mr F. himself must in part be sensible of what I now urge; for he could not otherwise have failed to state, that holiness of life precedes faith, and is included in it. What need hinder him to say, that the Spirit of God produces, in those whom he intends to justify, all holy conversation and godliness; and that love, joy, peace, long-suffering, and all the fruits of the Spirit, belong to the nature and essence of faith? Upon this plan, he could still show that such persons are not justified by works; for although they have every good work which the law of Christ requires, yet "they work not *with respect to justification*."

He appeals to the examples of Abraham and David, Rom. iv., in proof of his assertion that justification by faith without works, does not imply that the person so justified is destitute of true

* The Apostle James affirms, it is true, that "a man is justified by works, and not by faith only;" but he has quite a different subject in view, viz. God's approbation of his people, already justified by faith, when they glorify him by doing his will.

holiness before he is brought into a state of favour with God. This, by the way, shows that he does not exclude works, properly so called; for surely the father of the faithful, and the man according to God's own heart, were not deficient in these: of the former it is said, "Seest thou how faith wrought with his works?" From the instance of Abraham he affirms, that "it is manifest that the character described by the Apostle in Rom. iv., is not that of an enemy but a friend of God;* and that it is not merely applicable to a Christian at the first moment of his believing, but through the whole of life. "We have," says he, "to deal with Christ for pardon and justification more than once; and must always go to him as *working not, but believing on him that justifieth the ungodly.*"

It is unquestionably true, that believers need daily pardon; for they sin daily. But how Mr F. could suppose that "they have to do with Christ for *justification more than once*," I cannot understand. The Scriptures declare, that "there is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus. It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth?" It is opposite to the nature of the thing, as well as to the express declarations of the Word of God, to suppose that justification needs to be repeated. But perhaps this has dropt from him inadvertently. If, however, he admit that believers are only once justified, and never afterwards come into condemnation, it will be extremely difficult for him to maintain his position. What were they during the former period of their lives, and immediately before they were justified by grace? "Dead in trespasses and sins; fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; alienated, and enemies to God in their minds by wicked works; without Christ, having no hope, and without God in the world,"—either leading an openly immoral life, as the avowed enemies of God —or, by outward sobriety, forms of religion, and some fancied amendment of heart, endeavouring to make their peace with him, and thus pouring contempt upon the exceeding riches of Divine grace displayed in Christ Jesus towards the utterly worthless. I might quote almost the whole of the New Testament in proof of this doctrine, and give other solid reasons why Mr F.'s affirmations, with respect to holy dispositions of

* A judicious author, whose works are often cited by Mr F., expresses a very different opinion:—"All that are justified were before ungodly; and all that are justified are at the same instant made godly. But the question is, Whether they are godly or ungodly antecedently at any moment of time unto their justification? If they are considered as godly, and are so indeed, then the Apostle's words are not true; for the contradictory proposition is true—God justifieth none but the godly."—*Owen on Justification, Glasgow Edit.* 1760, p 553, 554.—This reasoning is just, forcible, and conclusive.

the heart antecedent to faith, cannot be true. But this is another branch of the subject, which it is not my design at present fully to investigate. I certainly do not maintain, as Mr F. unjustly insinuates with respect to Mr M'Lean, that a person who is actually justified is at that moment the enemy of God. That which justifies him, also reconciles him, and makes him the friend of God. I can conceive no time to intervene between the production of these two leading effects of the Gospel by the power of the Spirit of God. But justification is first in order. The enmity of a sinner's heart cannot be slain, but by his discerning and crediting that which frees him from condemnation, and gives him peace with God. And what is it? "We are justified by the blood of Christ, reconciled to God by the death of his Son, reconciled in the body of his flesh through death." And all true holiness proceeds from the same cause; for "the grace of God, which hath appeared to all men, bringing salvation, teacheth us, that denying ungodliness, and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world."

It is most readily admitted, that a person who has believed the Gospel and served God for many years, obtains Divine forgiveness, and has his peace renewed, precisely on the same ground with the vilest sinner, immediately brought to the knowledge of the truth. But as the people of God are justified when they first believe in Christ, and are not afterwards permitted to fall from that state; for "whom God justifieth, them he also glorifieth;" we may therefore conclude, with all safety, that when the Apostle describes a justified person, Rom. iv. 5, he is not telling us what his character is long after his conversion, but what it was before, and until he was "washed, and sanctified, and justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."

3. If Mr F.'s description of faith be a just one, it will bear to be introduced into some of those texts of Scripture in which faith and works are contrasted. Let us try how it will suit in this way. "We conclude that a man is justified by a holy exercise of soul towards Christ, and not by the deeds of the law. To him that worketh not, but exerciseth a holy disposition of heart towards him that justifieth the ungodly, his holy disposition of heart is counted for righteousness. But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident; for the just shall live by a holy exercise of the soul towards Christ. And the law is not of a holy exercise of soul; but the man that doth them shall live in them. Being justified by a persuasion arising from the moral state of the heart, and partaking of it, we have peace with God!" No comment is necessary. Every

one who relishes the doctrine of Divine grace, as it is clearly stated in the pure and unadulterated Word of God, will be shocked at this corruption of it, by which a law of works is presented to us under the semblance of the glorious Gospel of Christ. The author's reasoning is subtle, and some of his arguments are specious, and calculated to ensnare the unwary. I hope those who know the true grace of God wherein Christians stand, will be on their guard against them; and that inquirers will diligently search the Scriptures, to see whether his sentiments or mine are confirmed by that only infallible standard of truth.

Without taking any farther notice of what Mr Fuller has advanced with respect to holy dispositions of heart antecedent to faith in Christ, I beg leave to make some additional remarks on his description of faith itself; leaving it with Mr M'Lean to discuss the former point, and to enter into a more full investigation of the latter than can with propriety be admitted in a periodical publication. I have already shown that faith and works are most accurately distinguished in the Word of God, and that the subterfuge by which Mr F. would evade the force of an insurmountable objection, by endeavouring to make it appear, that, although faith be of the nature of working, yet it justifies, not as a work, but as it unites the soul to Christ, can yield him no shelter; and that his description of faith will not bear to be introduced into those texts of Scripture in which faith and works are distinguished and contrasted. My argument will be confirmed by observing, in general,

4. That when two things are contrasted, or set in opposition to one another, in the sacred writings, and not merely stated in the way of comparison or preference, they are always either wholly, or in some leading respect, essentially different in their natures. Innumerable instances of this might be produced. A few of them will be sufficient to prove that the manner in which faith and works are contrasted, in relation to the justification of sinners in the sight of God, does not leave us at liberty to imagine that faith and holiness are one and the same thing. When the Apostle Paul says to the Romans, "Ye are not under the law, but under grace," Rom. vi. 14, and "Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit," chap. viii. 9, is it possible for us to conceive that there is no material difference between the law and grace, and that their being led by the Spirit of Christ, and living and walking in the Spirit, was not precisely the opposite of being under the dominion of the fleshly corrupt principle which they had derived from fallen Adam? Yet the law and grace, the flesh and the Spirit, are not more clearly or energetically opposed to one another in the Scrip-

tures, than faith and works are. He affirms that "God hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began," 2 Tim. i. 9; and that "he saved us, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy," iii. 5. And shall we say that there is no essential difference between our own works being the cause of our salvation, and its being effected by the grace and mercy of God our Saviour, in consequence of his own eternal purpose?

The same Apostle gives this edifying account of his own experience in the life of faith: "For Christ Jesus my Lord I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him; not having mine own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith," Phil. iii. 8, 9. Here it is manifest that he sets in opposition to his own personal righteousness the all-perfect righteousness of the Son of God, disclaiming the one, and embracing the other, as that alone in which he could appear with acceptance at the last day; and that he likewise contrasts faith with the law, while he declares that his own righteousness was of the law, but that the righteousness in which he desired to be found was by the faith of Christ, consequently not of the law, in any sense in which that expression can be justly explained.

The contrast between grace and works is most emphatically stated, when the Apostle informs the Romans that at that time there was a remnant among the Jews "according to the election of grace." He adds, "And if by grace, then is it no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace; otherwise work is no more work," Rom. xi. 5, 6. Language more express, or reasoning more simple and conclusive, never was nor can be employed by any writer, upon any subject, human or Divine. Yet I conceive myself fully warranted by the nature of the thing, and by the whole current of Scripture, to hold the same language with respect to faith. If salvation be through *faith*, then is it no more of works; otherwise faith is no more faith. It is utterly inconsistent with its nature, to suppose that they who are saved by faith, obtain salvation by their own works or holy dispositions of heart, in any respect whatever, qualified or unqualified. Therefore the promise, or the righteousness contained in it, "is of faith, that it might be by grace," Rom. iv. 19. It could not be by grace in any other way. But if faith itself be a work, as Mr F. affirms, then surely we must be saved by what we

reckon a good work, if we are saved by faith. He says, indeed, that "it is not supposed to justify as a work." But how can it justify as any other thing than what it really is? If it be a work, and yet considered, when we are justified by it, as no work, then it must be admitted that we carefully divest it of its true nature, and adopt a false idea of it in relation to the justification of sinners. There is an affectation of humility, and a trimming work here, which could never have been imposed upon us by a holy and righteous God; nor is there a single word in all the Scriptures which can be fairly construed into any such meaning.

I shall only take notice of another text in which faith is opposed to sight, an essential quality which is frequently attributed to it in the Word of God, and which will not be disputed. Paul, when describing his own experience, and that of his fellow Christians, says, "We walk by faith, *not* by sight," 2 Cor. v. 7, which implies that nothing which falls within the cognizance of our senses can properly be considered as the object of faith. The things which we are called to believe are "things not seen as yet," eternal things, the evidence of the existence and reality of which, is not within ourselves, but communicated by the testimony of God; and the same observation holds true in relation to worldly things, in which we ourselves are conversant, and those things for which we have no other proof than the testimony of credible witnesses. In both cases our knowledge may be increased; in the latter only, we can, in strict propriety, be said to believe. But however indisputable this quality of faith may be, an ingenious man might find plausible arguments against it. When the Spirit of God descended like a dove and abode upon Christ, John Baptist said, "I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God." And Christ himself says to Thomas, "Because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed; blessed are they who have not seen, and yet have believed." Now, whatever be the import of these and other similar sayings, would it not be strange to argue from them that seeing is believing, and that believing is seeing, in opposition to the express declaration of the Apostle already quoted? And does it not betray at least an equal degree of prejudice and want of simplicity, to affirm, upon any ground whatever, that believing is working, although the Word of God hath testified that a man is justified by faith, and not by the deeds of the law?

5. "What, then, is faith?" Some will be ready to exclaim, "The faith of God's elect, the faith of the operation of God, and without which it is impossible to please God. Will you venture to disparage the great work of believing, and to represent it as a thing of nought? Is there no virtue, no moral

worth in it, no holy exercise of the soul towards Christ, nor any act of obedience to the Divine law? Does its heavenly nature consist of nothing more than simply believing what God says, without including the consent of the will, and the exercise of grateful and devout affections?"

I answer—Great is the virtue of faith in Christ. It is the gift of God, and therefore must be good. It is truly precious, for they only who believe are justified, and shall obtain everlasting life. It humbles the soul under a deep and abiding sense of sin. It leads perishing sinners to that which alone can relieve and comfort them—the all-atoning sacrifice of the Son of God; they are filled with all joy and peace in believing, and abound in hope through the power of the Holy Spirit. It purifieth the heart; it worketh by love to God and man; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. It animates all who are possessed of it, to "offer, by Jesus Christ, the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of their lips, giving thanks to his name; and to do good, and to communicate, knowing that with such sacrifices God is well pleased." I should never have done, were I to recapitulate all the virtues of faith. See how it wrought in Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, &c., Heb. xi.; and how other Old Testament worthies "through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens." Christians live by the faith of the Son of God; and when they die, it tunes their hearts to sing this song of triumph: "O death! where is thy sting? O grave! where is thy victory?" They overcome all their enemies "by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony," and "receive the end of their faith, even the salvation of their souls."

But still, whatever may be the causes, the concomitants, and the beneficial consequences of faith, I maintain that nothing more is included in its nature than simply believing or crediting the Divine record. Mr F. has not produced, nor is he able to produce, a single text, which, by a fair interpretation, can be otherwise explained. Indeed, the Apostles, in preaching the Gospel, never gave their hearers a scientific definition of faith. They seem to have proceeded on the well-grounded supposition, that all who heard them knew as well as they did what it was to believe a testimony. Their hearers were in general ignorant of the truth as it is in Jesus, which therefore they declared, and illustrated with great plainness of speech; they likewise confirmed it by the most satisfactory evidence, and

commanded all men every where to repent, and believe the Gospel which they preached; but they never gave any explanation of faith or believing. One would think, however, that nothing could have been more necessary, if Mr F.'s description of it be just. The people to whom the Apostles preached the Gospel, at least most of Paul's hearers, were totally unacquainted with theological disputes. Even the Jews, among whom there were theological controversies in abundance, did not deal much in enquiries about the nature of faith. If, however, they had conceived it to be a work, it is not unlikely that they might have adopted it into their system; for their plea in favour of justification by works, was open and undisguised. But they perceived the distinction between faith and works, with sufficient clearness to draw forth all their enmity against the former. We may therefore conclude, that none of the Apostles' hearers understood that faith was "a work, a moral excellency, a holy exercise of the soul towards Christ." Why, then, did they not inform them of a thing which, if true, was so essentially necessary to be known, when they connected salvation with the faith of what they declared? Just because no such idea every entered into their minds. The introduction of confused, irrational, and unscriptural definitions of faith, was reserved for an after period, when the simplicity of the Christian doctrine was so much corrupted, that men began to make a merit even of faith and repentance; which, for any thing we know from the writings of the Apostles, was not so much as heard of in their days.

It appears to me unnecessary to enlarge farther with respect to the nature of faith. Indeed, it is much to be lamented that it should ever have become a matter of dispute among professing Christians, or that any of them should have imagined faith or belief to be any thing else than what all men, except those whose judgments have been perverted by false religious principles, understand it to be. I shall therefore only observe, in addition to the foregoing simple account of it, that, whatever virtue or excellency faith possesses, it is derived solely and exclusively from the glorious object of faith, Jesus the Son of God. If it be a living faith, it is so because it unites the soul to Christ, who liveth for ever at the right hand of God, and is mighty to save, and because they who believe, hear the voice of the Son of God, and live; if it be precious, it is so because the righteousness of our God and Saviour, in which believers glory, is infinitely precious; and if it produces hope, and charity, and every disposition and practice which God approves, these effects are owing to the transforming influence of the glory of God shining in the face of Christ, and discerned by faith in

him who is the image of the invisible God. To him therefore, and not to guilty mortals who presume to talk of faith as their work and their holiness, be all the glory.

6. Mr Fuller supposes that he has gained a complete triumph over some of his opponents, who admit that faith is a duty, and yet deny that it has all that intrinsic moral worth for which he pleads. I am one of those who not only cannot deny that it is the indispensable duty of unconverted sinners to repent and believe the Gospel, but who assert and maintain this as an important article of Divine truth. Undoubtedly, "God commandeth all men every where to repent;" and "the Gospel is, by the commandment of the everlasting God, preached to all nations for the obedience of faith." In this argument, on which he seems to lay the greatest stress, he takes it for granted that, because faith is commanded, and works are commanded, therefore faith, as well as good works, must be "influenced by the moral state of the heart," and have in it, not as the principle of holiness, and subjection to God, but in its own nature, "and aside from its good effects, something of conformity to the Divine law."

Now, it is certainly true that no work is acceptable to God unless it be a good work, that is, if it do not arise from the moral state of the heart, and a holy disposition of soul towards God; or, in other words, if it do not flow from love to him, for "this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments; and he that loveth not, knoweth not God, for God is love." But is there no difference between a commandment to believe the Gospel, and a commandment to love God, and to be actively employed in doing his will? The former, I am persuaded, is a commandment to cease from working, by which unbelievers can only "go about to establish their own righteousness, not submitting themselves to the righteousness of God." It is a commandment to believe that the work on which alone we ought to depend for salvation, is already finished, that God is well pleased, and that he justifieth the ungodly, not working but believing. This is "the law of faith," by which boasting is excluded.

The best quality of faith is, that it does not consist in doing any thing for ourselves, but in believing that God in his infinite mercy hath done every thing for lost sinners which their perishing situation required. How absurd, then, is it to represent faith as an act of obedience to a law of works, in opposition to the express declarations of Scripture formerly quoted! There is, therefore, no inconsistency in acknowledging that faith is a duty, and at the same time denying that there is any thing in it of the nature of working. On the contrary, one of the greatest

evils of unbelief is, that it opposes the faithful testimony of the dying Saviour, "it is finished," and puts wretched sinners upon the arduous task of endeavouring to obtain the favour of God by their own holy dispositions, good works, or devotional exercises. The duty of faith strips men of all their boasted qualifications; the sin of unbelief prompts them to glory in their fancied attainments; and there is good reason to suspect, that they who entertain Mr F.'s notion of faith, are not reduced, in their own eyes, to the condition of mere sinners, needy suppliants, and persons who can only live by free and sovereign mercy. It is remarkable that the quality which Mr F. ascribes to faith, as the opposite of the sin of unbelief, is inseparably connected with the sin which unbelief never fails to produce, namely, self-confidence; for the man who has a great deal to say about the holiness and the moral worth of his faith, by which he professes to be justified, cannot consistently hold that he is "justified by faith without the deeds of the law." Instead of saying, with the Apostle, "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified;" such persons can only affirm, that they cannot be justified without faith in Christ, nor by that either, if it be not "a holy disposition of heart, and a conformity to the Divine law." Thus they virtually set aside the distinction between faith and works, which the Apostle so anxiously maintained, and without a clear discernment of which it is impossible to have a just idea of what is meant by justification through the faith of Christ. Alas! how much is it to be regretted that a principal teacher among that body of professing Christians maintaining the doctrine of free grace, should thus be employed in using his utmost efforts to subvert it, and that many who admire him as a preacher "love to have it so." That he has not formed any such design, I fully admit. Nay, I have no doubt that he thinks his Appendix will be of great service to the cause of truth. But it is not on that account the less dangerous. I would therefore take the liberty to intreat those who may have opportunities of hearing such doctrine, to be constantly upon their guard, and to avoid "the instruction which causeth to err from the words of knowledge."

A CAUTION TO CHRISTIANS AGAINST EXCEEDING IN THE USE OF INTOXICATING LIQUORS.

The Word of God not only gives general instructions with respect to sobriety, righteousness, and godliness; but particularizes all the duties of the Christian life, and guards us against the commission of every crime. The first Christians were not taught to think themselves degraded, or to imagine that unworthy suspicions were entertained of the sincerity of their profession, when they were "besought as strangers and pilgrims to abstain from *fleshly lusts*, which war against the soul." In the doctrine of our Lord, and the inspired epistles to the churches, we frequently meet with solemn cautions against theft, against uncleanness in all its forms, and even against murder. That there should be any occasion to address such exhortations to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, is a most humbling consideration. But he who supposes himself beyond the reach of temptation, in any respect whatever, and feels no necessity for crucifying the flesh with its affections and lusts, is ignorant of his own heart, and peculiarly in danger of falling into sin.

Permit me, then, to remind you of an exhortation given by the Apostle Paul to a Church of Christ, Eph. v. 18, "*Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit.*"

The evil which we are here cautioned against, is drunkenness, or excess in the use of strong liquors; for although wine alone is mentioned, this term includes every other sort of drink by which men can be intoxicated; and in this extended sense it must be understood in the whole of this address. The same caution is given by the Lord Jesus Christ to his own disciples, Luke xxi. 34, "Take heed lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness." It is an essential requisite in the characters of elders and deacons of Christian churches, that they shall be "not given to wine," and Titus is commanded to enjoin the same thing on aged women. Other admonitions are given on this subject to the disciples of Christ in general, as in Rom. xiii. 13, 1 Pet. iv. 3. Drunkards are ranked among the characters which are excluded from the kingdom of heaven, 1 Cor. vi. 10, Gal. v. 21; and the curse of God is upon them while they drag out a wretched life in this world, Deut. xxix. 19, 20.

This practice is so frequent and so general, that it is often

treated lightly, even by the sober and respectable part of society, and seems to be considered by them, not as a heinous crime, but as an infirmity of a trivial nature, and often as a subject of mirth and entertainment! At least, if a man do not render himself incapable of transacting business, and of paying his just debts, he may drink as much as he pleases without sustaining any essential injury to his character in the world. Nay, the horror of this crime, which, at a former period, may have possessed the minds of those who fear God, is too often abated by seeing instances of it every day. It is the more necessary that we should pay close attention to the Scriptures, and take from thence all our ideas of sin and duty on this subject. I shall consider it under the following heads.

I. The proper use of strong drink. II. The boundary, beyond which we cannot go without criminal excess. III. An exposure of temptations which lead to this practice. IV. An illustration of that which is stated by way of contrast, "Be filled with the Spirit."

First, I begin with a remark upon the proper use of wine, and other strong liquors. These ought to be reckoned among the bounties of Divine Providence. They are good in themselves, however much they may be abused; for "every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: for it is sanctified by the Word of God and prayer," 1 Tim. iv. 4, 5. "Wine, that maketh glad the heart of man," is one of the blessings mentioned in a song of praise to God for his goodness to the whole creation, Psalm civ. 15.

It is a medicine to the weak and diseased, and was in this view recommended to Timothy, "Use a little wine for thy stomach's sake, and thine often infirmities." But mark the expression—a little wine. The benevolent intention of the great Creator in bestowing this gift, as in every other which he bestows, is to promote the comfort of his creature man; hence it is written, "Give strong drink to him that is ready to perish, and wine to those that be of heavy hearts," Prov. xxxi. 6. Its exhilirating influence is well adapted to the circumstances of the persons who are here described; and their being the subjects of that influence is not sinful, otherwise all interference with that which so operates upon us, must be unlawful.

Wine may likewise be considered, in a more general point of view, as one of the many comforts provided for us by our bountiful Creator, which, indeed, is expressed in the passage already quoted from Psalm civ. It forms a part of the nourishment and support allotted for the human body, and is meant to contribute to our happiness, and to give a relish to other innocent enjoyments. It may lawfully be used both on

ordinary occasions, and at feasts. In the latter case, my remark is confirmed by the example of Christ, who attended a marriage feast in Cana of Galilee, and miraculously provided wine for the entertainment of the guests.

We should judge erroneously, therefore, were we to suppose that the use of strong drink is absolutely prohibited, or that the Lord's own people, whose constant duty it is to watch and be sober, commit any crime, when, with due moderation and thankfulness, they partake of what God hath freely given them; "when they eat in due season" (that is, at timely hours) "for strength, and not for drunkenness."

Second, I shall endeavour to mark the boundary, beyond which we cannot go without criminal excess.

You will observe that the thing condemned by this Apostle is immoderate or excessive drinking. "Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess." And it is of the greatest consequence to our own happiness and safety, that we should have some criterion by which we may know, with certainty, what is meant by excess; for wherever that begins, there is the transgression of the Divine law, though we should never be in a state of complete intoxication.

In general, a man does not exceed in the use of strong drink, except when, in one respect or other, he does an injury to himself, or to those with whom he is connected. I am not acquainted with any Divine law, either preceptive or prohibitory, which does not essentially contribute to the happiness of those who obey it. Men, indeed, will not be subject to the law of God. They would consider themselves as completely miserable in yielding to its restrictions. But this arises from the sinful bias of their nature, and their putting evil for good, and good for evil. On the contrary, they who are redeemed by the blood of Christ, and are made alive to God through him, notwithstanding all their imperfections, know experimentally, that "in the keeping of God's commandments there is a great reward," and that every thing which he hath prohibited, has, in its own nature, a tendency to mar their true happiness. The use of wine, therefore, is forbidden only in that degree in which it proves hurtful to mankind.

The evil of excessive drinking will best appear by stating some of its effects; and in these you will perceive, also, what the crime is, or when, or by whom it is committed.

1. Drinking to excess generally produces partial or complete deprivation of reason, the most distinguished blessing which God hath given to man. When we see a fellow-creature, from other causes, in a state of mental derangement, especially if we have known him in his better days, our hearts are pained

with sympathy and regret; we mourn over a human being bereaved of all that constitutes the dignity of his nature; and, as soon as possible, we turn with pain from the afflicting scene. What, then, is the guilt of that man who voluntarily brings himself into those degrading circumstances, merely for the sake of a momentary sensual gratification? He disregards equally the authority of God, and his own happiness; nay, he sinks below the level of the brute creation, which are incapable of such base and unworthy conduct! They may equal him in sensuality; but they cannot indulge in it at so great a cost.

This effect of immoderate drinking, may be produced in a greater or in a less degree. But if a man's mental powers be at all deranged, to that extent he is intoxicated, or drunk with wine, wherein is excess. He may still have as much recollection and self-government, as will enable him to transact ordinary business, and to conceal from others his real situation, while he feels in himself undeniable symptoms of a confused judgment and a disordered imagination, sure indications of the guilt which he has contracted.

I have formerly noticed that the Scriptures speak of the exhilirating or cheering quality of wine without censure; but it is not easy, at all times, to distinguish between that and its inebriating tendency. The latter is nothing more than the former carried to excess. But the danger here, although very great, is no reason why we should confound two things which are perfectly distinct. In one respect, if we judge impartially, we may arrive at a clear solution of this difficulty. When the heart is heavy, and when a man is ready to perish, strong drink, administered within due bounds, instead of deranging his intellectual powers, will give relief from that lassitude and depression by which his whole frame has been disordered. His understanding will become less clouded, his imagination less disturbed, and all his faculties more lively, vigorous, and active. In the case referred to, and in every other, we ought not merely to avoid doing ourselves harm, but to refuse taking any more strong drink than can reasonably be supposed to do us good. This would keep us at so great a distance from forbidden ground, that we should scarcely be in danger of insobriety, so far as it consists in the intemperate use of liquor.

2. Intoxication, producing in any degree the effect which has been mentioned, as it never fails to do, unfits us for the immediate service of God. And do you think that we can innocently put ourselves into a situation which forbids our approaching to God, or which would lead us to draw near to him without having a full recollection of his infinite greatness and majesty, of our own utter unworthiness, and of the living way into the holiest

of all, by the blood of Jesus? It is the high privilege, as well as the duty of Christians, "to pray always, with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and to watch thereunto with all perseverance for all saints;" and every thing that tends to interrupt these exercises, or to indispose the mind for attending to them, must be evil. If you should be at a loss to know, upon any occasion, whether you have exceeded the bounds of sobriety, let conscience impartially decide this question, "Am I in a proper state of mind for praying to God?" And you may yet put another question, still more awful and important, "Should I be seized with no remorse, should my soul this night be required of me?"

3. Many other injuries to a man's self and family are the fruits of immoderate drinking. To me it is doubtful if there be any other practice common in the world, which is so fatally and extensively ruinous both to soul and body. It consumes time, and cuts the sinews of industry. And here I would remark that a professing Christian who has, in some measure, got into the habit of tippling, supposing him never to have been in the smallest degree inebriated, loses precious time, neglects his business, wastes his substance, and gives a bad example to others; while he himself is in the utmost danger of becoming a complete drunkard, and at any rate can have little relish for spiritual enjoyments, when he delights in the company and conversation of bottle companions. But this is not all. A real drunkard exposes himself to many dangers in his nocturnal rambles; his health is impaired, his affairs are deranged, his wife and children are reduced to a state of wretchedness which would break any heart except that of a drunkard; he is despised and avoided by all who have any character to lose; and while thus deprived of almost every human comfort, if he think at all on the world to come, he sees nothing before him but everlasting perdition; for he reads in the Scriptures of truth, that "drunkards shall not inherit the kingdom of God." Is it possible to conceive a more affecting display of human misery? But you shall presently see where it is better described; for the Word of God excels, not only in the purity and truth of its doctrine, but in the simple and energetic manner in which it communicates instruction and reproof.

In the Book of Proverbs, chap. xxiii. ver. 29, to the end, a description is given of the accumulated misery arising out of the crime of drunkenness. "Who hath wo? who hath sorrow? who hath contention? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine, they that go to seek mixed wine. Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his

colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder. Thine eyes shall behold strange women, and thine heart shall utter perverse things. Yea, thou shalt be as he that lieth down in the midst of the sea; or as he that lieth on the top of a mast. They have stricken me, shalt thou say, and I was not sick; they have beaten me, and I felt it not. When shall I awake? I will seek it yet again!"

Is he a rational creature who is here described? What pretensions can he have to reason, while he laughs at the dulness of sober men, placing all his own happiness in the enjoyment of frantic mirth, yet plunging himself into the deepest sorrow, and from the troubled ocean in which he swims, declaring his unabated attachment to the source of all his wo? Every candid person, however, will admit that the melancholy picture is drawn from life. It is animated and impressive, but just and natural, and such as we have seen exemplified in thousands of those who reckon themselves the votaries of pleasure. Pleasure! believe them not; their joy is deceitful and transitory; their misery is real and irretrievable, if sovereign mercy, the object of their impious and sarcastic raillery, do not save them from the pit of destruction!

4. There is no crime whatever, to the perpetration of which a drunkard is not peculiarly exposed. In the Scriptures, men are said to be "inflamed with wine." The passions are roused, and every lust is excited by its pernicious and debasing influence. Some of those evils are mentioned by Solomon in the passage already quoted. "Thine heart shall utter perverse things; tracing the evils of the tongue to the corruption of the heart, from whence proceed all those things which defile the man." In some convivial meetings, every thing is spoken that is profane, obscene, and blasphemous. "Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips; their mouth is full of cursing and bitterness." Solomon farther predicts, "Thine eyes shall behold strange women"—another evil in many cases resulting from insobriety. Violence, strife, and debate, are streams proceeding from the same polluted fountain; as are also theft, robbery, and murder! Nay, there is reason to conclude that a very great majority of those who perish on a gibbet, commit the crimes for which they suffer in a state of intoxication, or in consequence of a habit of drinking rendering them callous to every principle of justice, honour, and humanity!

Having thus stated many of the dreadful consequences resulting from the immoderate use of strong liquors, nothing more, I think, is necessary to impress upon your minds the evil of

that practice, its hatefulness in the sight of God, and the danger to which you will be exposed, if you tamper with it in any degree; and the recapitulation of so many of its bitter fruits will, I trust, leave you at no loss to perceive what is meant in the Scriptures by excess of wine. Though you may suppose that you have departed from the strictest rules of sobriety only in a very small degree, in so doing you are not guiltless; and you exceed when this involves you in the least of the evils which have been mentioned. If any doubts remain, rather deny yourselves part of that which you might lawfully enjoy, than run the risk of going at all beyond the bounds prescribed by the law of God. So far as conscience is concerned, all the danger lies on the side of self-indulgence.

The bad effects which I have attributed to excessive drinking, may be in part avoided by men of strong constitutions, who have been in the habit of using great quantities of liquor. They tarry long at the wine without losing their recollection or the power of speech, or being carried home in a state of insensibility. But this is equally the crime of drunkenness, as in other cases where the effects of liquor are more visible; and there is a peculiar Divine threatening against those who exceed in this manner. "Wo to them that are mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink," Isa. v. 22. There is in one view an aggravation in the guilt of that man who, without intoxication, extensively abuses the blessings of Divine Providence; who, by his example and persuasion, ensnares others, and who can deliberately enjoy the malicious satisfaction of seeing his companions drunk with wine, and reduced to a most deplorable state of degradation and misery! This pleasure is truly diabolical, and gives a striking proof that the heart of man is desperately wicked.

Third, The next thing which claims your attention, is an exposure of the temptations which lead to excess of wine.

1. A very ensnaring temptation, which has a more general influence than any other, is company and example. It is not your duty, as Christians, to avoid all civil intercourse with worldly men, to behave towards them in a shy and distant manner, or to decline eating and drinking with them in a social and friendly way. Our blessed Lord who did no sin, on various occasions attended feasts, and ate and drank with publicans and sinners; and he warns us against self-exaltation when we are bidden to a feast, implying surely that our accepting the invitation is not unlawful, if we give an example of humility, and of moderation in the use of temporal enjoyments.

It is likewise supposed by the Apostle Paul, that the Corinthians might be invited to a feast, and that they might be

" disposed to go." To this he does not object; but gives instructions how their conduct ought to be regulated. And when he prohibits " keeping company," or being on terms of intimacy, and even eating a common meal with excommunicated persons, he thus qualifies the prohibition, " Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, &c."; for then must ye needs go out of the world,"—plainly admitting familiar intercourse with worldly men sustaining the characters there mentioned, 1 Cor. v. 9—11. Mark his expression, however, " yet not altogether;" and the reason why the prohibition did not extend to all men, because it would have placed the followers of Christ in a state of exclusion from the world, and rendered them incapable of " making their light to shine before men."

From the manner in which this liberty is given to Christians, and from the spirit of that religion which they profess, so completely opposite to the course of this world, it is plain that those of them who, without necessity, are much in the company of worldly men, abuse their liberty in this respect, and wantonly expose themselves to many temptations. To those who are lovers of the truth, and exercised to godliness, their fellow Christians, in distinction from all others, will be " their own company," and like the Psalmist, they will be " the companions of all those who fear God," accounting them the excellent ones of the earth, in whom is all their delight.

But supposing that you are not disposed to plead for any further extent of liberty than will clearly show that you have not gone out of the world, and that you do not *altogether* avoid social intercourse with worldly men, temptations to be drunk with wine wherein is excess, will still assail you from this quarter. Example has an ensnaring influence, often unperceived by those on whom it operates; and even persons who are sanctified by the truth, have as much remaining corruption as disposes them, on some occasions, to follow a multitude to do evil.

Among the middle and higher orders of society, the barbarous practice of what may be styled compelling men to drink, is nearly exploded. But there are not a few who will be officious enough to persuade and entreat you, without assuming any thing like a commanding influence; and it is not easy for persons of little experience to resist so much kind importunity and flattering attention. Nay, it frequently happens, in large companies, that the majority consists of sober men, who are extremely averse to excessive drinking, and yet retire, not perhaps really intoxicated, but conscious, less or more, of having gone beyond the rules of strict sobriety. Your

own safety, therefore, requires that you should not be often in such companies; and when you are thus within the reach of temptation, that you should watch against it with the utmost diligence.

You are not without danger in smaller, and more select companies, and those even which consist only, or chiefly, of your fellow Christians. Wherever there is a feast, that is, any thing beyond our ordinary meals, and a degree of mirth and happiness which may innocently be indulged in the society of our friends, we meet with temptations to excess in eating and drinking, and to the ebullitions of foolish mirth, tending to dissipate the mind, and to wear off the impressions of Divine things. Those who are much given to company in this way, do not, in general, give themselves time for serious reflection; nor is their practice consistent with "taking heed, lest at any time their hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness."

I would wish to discourage the practice of frequent supper parties. The late hours which are now so prevalent;* the neglect of family duties, or of private reading, meditation, and prayer; the confused state of mind in which the parties, though not intoxicated, must go to rest; and their unfitness for early rising, and active employment on the succeeding day; are evils which ought to prevent this practice from becoming fashionable among those who feel the obligation to "watch and pray, that they enter not into temptation." I do not affirm, however, that supping abroad can be justly censured in every instance. My remarks are directed, not so much against the thing itself, as against making it a common practice, or overlooking, upon any occasion, the evils which, in the present state of society, are almost inseparably connected with it.

2. Weakness and bodily diseases, especially of the nervous kind, have in many instances been the occasion of inducing a habit of drinking. Depression of spirits, and disorders in the stomach and bowels, the usual attendants of a debilitated nervous system, call for an immediate remedy; and the patient has not fortitude to wait for the more slow and effectual operations of nature, assisted by means which are within the reach of all. He therefore has recourse to strong drink, which, if it do not effect a cure, will, by its stupifying influence, give apparent ease, and make him forget his pains and sorrows. The

* It is probable that few persons recollect, when pleasing themselves with having retired at a timely hour, that the servants, if not also the mistress of the family, must spend perhaps another hour, before they can accomplish the remaining work of the evening.

relief is temporary; the former symptoms return with increased violence; and if the same remedy be applied, it is thought necessary, day after day, to use it in larger quantities, till at last the patient becomes a complete drunkard; and then his nervous system, instead of being restored to its former vigour, is diseased beyond the possibility of being cured by any medicine except sobriety.

There are no instances of ardent spirits having proved a radical cure for nervous disorders. And among the few instances which I have seen of persons delivered from a habit of drinking, those of them who adopted it for the sake of health, enjoyed no health or comfort while they followed that practice; and when they were entirely delivered from it, health of body, as well as peace of mind, uniformly attended the happy change. Were it otherwise, it would still be the duty of the people of God "to crucify the flesh, with its affections and lusts." But we ought thankfully to remark the close connexion which God hath established between our duty and our true happiness.

Aged persons are peculiarly in danger from their weakness and growing infirmities (which require every lawful and attainable means of support) of desiring the stimulating aid of strong drink; and although in certain cases a moderate quantity may be considered necessary, they nevertheless require, with the utmost caution, to guard against excess. To this effect aged women are exhorted, Tit. ii. 3. The temptations more incident to men, are those arising from company and example; while women are more in danger from nervous and hysterical affections, to which the weakness of their frame renders them peculiarly subject. And I may be permitted to remind them, that "excess of wine" is not only in all cases evil in itself, extremely hurtful to those who indulge in it, and dishonouring to God; but also destructive of all that is justly accounted amiable in the female sex.

In some violent and sudden diseases, when better remedies cannot be obtained, it may be necessary to use large quantities of ardent spirits; but these ought to be taken as we receive a loathsome medicine, and continued no longer than absolute necessity requires. Very great advantage may be derived from a judicious and temporary use of strong liquors, while nothing can possibly be worse for the human body than habitual excess; and nervous disorders, perhaps more than any other, are increased and confirmed by this destructive habit. Let those who have made the attempt without success, try the effect of temperance, industry, early rising, and daily exercise in the open air, and they will probably experience relief from a general

debility, which, if not occasioned, has been greatly increased, by their own sinful and unworthy conduct.

3. Idleness is another source of temptation to excess of wine. It is proverbial, indeed, that an idle man is a prey to every temptation, and in nothing is this more remarkably verified than in the practice of drinking. Thousands of those who almost daily frequent the tavern, or spend much of their time in private drinking parties, would be perfectly sober were they to pay that close attention to business, which justice to their creditors and the wants of their families imperiously demand. So great is the advantage of industry.

To be slothful in business, as some were in the Church of the Thessalonians, is represented by the Apostle Paul as "walking disorderly, and not after the tradition which they have received of him." The natural consequence is, that such become busy bodies; and while sauntering about, and talking of matters which do not concern them, either for the purpose of telling their foolish and hurtful stories, or perhaps merely to waste the time, which the vacant mind of an idle man knows not how to improve, they land in the tavern, and proceed from evil to worse. Or when, through the mere want of industry, "poverty cometh upon them as one that travelleth, and want as an armed man," incapable of the exertion which, in many cases, might still retrieve matters, they sink into a habitual state of despondency, and resolve by frequent intoxication to purchase a transient and delusive peace.

4. Some have been led into a habit of drinking, by following the dangerous practice of doing business in taverns, or of frequently taking refreshment in such houses, when it was in their power to have got it at home.

In the first of these, I have in view the ordinary trade of cities and towns, without extending my remark to business done at fairs and other public markets, or by travellers, who must often live in taverns. There are many shopkeepers, and other traders, who frequently leave their places of business to take orders and settle accounts in public-houses, not from choice, as some of them affirm, but because they cannot otherwise carry on their business. How, then, does it happen, that a great number of persons in similar situations have, each of them, conducted a prosperous trade for many years, without any such practice? This of itself is sufficient to prove that success in our lawful callings has no dependence on a practice so unworthy of the followers of Christ, and opposite even to the conduct of sober worldly men. But supposing that it was in some degree against your temporal interest to settle all your matters of business in your own shops or houses, or in

those of your employers, why should you, on that account, study the humour or the corrupt inclination of any man, by doing that which is in itself mean and dishonourable, and which manifestly tends to make you drunk with wine, wherein is excess?

The other practice of frequenting taverns for the mere purpose of getting refreshment when it is thought necessary, seems to have no excuse, unless some who do so, allege that their own houses are at too great a distance. If, however, they cannot spend as much time as to go home, far better were it that they should want till they can go, or find some other method of supplying their necessity, which one would think might be very easily contrived.

My intention is not in all respects to decry public-houses. When they are applied to useful purposes, such as receiving and gladdening the heart of the weary traveller, they prove a blessing to mankind. But when a professing disciple of Christ is in the habit of frequenting them without necessity, he exposes himself to great temptation; nay, he shows that he has already begun to fall before it.

5. A temptation to exceed in the use of strong drink arises from being engaged in selling it, and from being employed in manufacturing or preparing it for sale.

I do not mean to insinuate that there is any thing in the smallest degree criminal in the nature of such employments, or that persons so employed may not be exemplary for sobriety and every Christian virtue. But, unquestionably, many have fallen into a course of drunkenness in consequence of their having been exposed to this temptation; and some of them are persons who for many years had adorned the doctrine of God our Saviour. Let every one, therefore, who constantly has strong drink among his hands daily pray, "lead me not into temptation, but deliver me from evil;" and let him who is unable to withstand this temptation, at all hazards renounce that trade which might otherwise land him in everlasting misery.

6. The next temptation against which I shall take the liberty to admonish you, is the general, I may almost say the universal, practice in this country, of using ardent spirits not diluted with water.

It must not be supposed that my object is to charge with drunkenness, or with any degree of insobriety, all those who follow the practice now alluded to; for many of the most sober and regular people, through the force of habit, seem perfectly reconciled to it. I am not the less persuaded, however, that the practice in question is hurtful and dangerous. It cannot be denied that spirits of the strength usually drunk

without mixture, are much stronger than wine; that habit alone renders it possible for any one to take a single glass of this liquor without great pain, accompanied by a sense of suffocation, and probably some real injury to the health of the person; and, accustomed as we are to this unnatural drink, that yet, in many cases, the second glass will produce intoxication! Can any good reason be assigned why people who have no disease requiring so violent a medicine, should take a certain quantity of it every day? We might by slow degrees accustom ourselves to swallow an astonishing quantity of opium, of vitriol, and even of arsenic. But what advantage could we reap from it? These, it is true, are poisons, though occasionally used as medicines. And by what better name can we justly call a corroding liquor, by the abuse of which millions have perished? It has killed a far greater number of the human species than all the other poisons in the universe!

I have heard of persons who had been long in the habit of drinking immoderate quantities of ardent spirits, at last mixing them with Cayenne pepper when their proficiency in the art of drinking had rendered their palates insensible of the burning quality of the strongest spirits! If this appears shocking, why should you give countenance to that which leads to it? All strong liquors produce intoxication, but none so rapidly as ardent spirits. And if you should never exceed in point of quantity, ought you not seriously to consider that, by drinking a single glass, or half a glass, you sanction the use of the most dangerous of all liquors? Besides, as multitudes have thus been ensnared and overcome, how shall you know with certainty that none of you, at a future period, will exceed the limits which all sober people have hitherto prescribed?

7. There is another temptation, or rather a method of training persons to the habit of drinking, in some cases probably extending its influence through the whole lifetime of its unhappy objects. I mean the vile practice of teaching children to drink ardent spirits. If inveterate custom should make you doubt the truth of what I have advanced in relation to adults, you can have no doubt with respect to children. Their food is milk in distinction from strong meat, which belongeth to men of full age. And shall the strongest drink be given them? This treatment is not merely thoughtless and inconsiderate. It is cruel, because it does an immediate injury to the poor helpless children; and it may be productive of a long train of pernicious and fatal consequences. The desire of spirituous liquors, imbibed at an early period, may continue when they attain the age of manhood. Such is the dreadful hazard to which some children are exposed by their own parents; and

not merely dissolute and regardless parents, but some of those who maintain an irreproachable character for sobriety!

Can you seriously contemplate so many temptations arising both from things lawful and unlawful in their own nature, without perceiving a necessity for that cautious fear which is very often inculcated in the Word of God? "Blessed is the man that feareth alway." This state of mind is recommended to a church of Christ by the Apostle Paul, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who worketh in you both to will and to do of his own good pleasure;" and there is no wisdom in neglecting such admonitions, for "he who trusteth in his own heart is a fool."

Before attempting to show the import of that which is enjoined by way of contrast, "Be filled with the Spirit," allow me to remark that the prohibition and the commandment are evidently irreconcilable opposites. Not only is it impossible that any person can at the same moment be drunk with wine and filled with the Spirit; but the latter is a privilege which at no time can be enjoyed by an habitual drunkard. The line of conduct in which he is engaged, clearly proves that he "has not the Spirit of Christ, and is none of his;" for drunkenness is one of the works of the flesh, and the fruit of the Spirit is temperance, Gal. v. 19, to the end.

Drunkards, indeed, may talk about matters of religion. They may have a great deal of speculative knowledge, and be very zealous in maintaining their creed. Yet they resemble Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. "Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?"

A religious drunkard, or one who is such by profession, for he cannot be truly religious, is one of the most profane and hateful characters. He speaks of the solemn truths contained in the Word of God as if he believed and relished them, while he must be conscious that they produce no suitable influence upon his heart and conduct. He extols the riches of Divine grace revealed in the Gospel, while he sins, that grace may abound. As he proceeds inflaming himself with wine, he becomes more eloquent in speaking of the most serious and awful things, and dares to offer an affront to the God of heaven, by approaching him in prayer, perhaps in the midst of his family, when his intellectual faculties are more than half deranged by his intemperance; thus making his children witnesses, and probably imitators, of his own sinful conduct.

If you seriously admonish him in his sober moments, his mind, weakened by riotous living, is unable to withstand your reproof. He is alarmed; he confesses his great wickedness,

apparently in the most penitential manner; he sheds abundance of tears, and promises future amendment. But very soon "he returns with the dog to his vomit, and with the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire." His habits are beastly, and no just principle can make a lasting impression on his degraded mind.

Edinburgh, Nov. 18, 1808.

ON BEING FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT.

For illustrating this apostolic exhortation, "Be filled with the Spirit," I remark,

1. In the writings of the New Testament, the Apostles and others are frequently said to be filled with the Holy Spirit. This is affirmed of Zacharias, of Elizabeth, of John the Baptist, and of all the Apostles, of whom it is said that, on the day of Pentecost, "they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." When our Lord said to his disciples, "Ye shall be baptised with the Holy Spirit not many days hence," he evidently referred to that which took place on the day of Pentecost; and both expressions intimate an abundant communication of the Holy Spirit, producing the signs, and wonders, and miracles, and gifts, which are specified in Acts ii. and in many other parts of the apostolic writings. The same thing also seems intended in these words of Jesus, "He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water;" for it is added, "But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive, for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified." And the Holy Spirit being compared to rivers of living water flowing out of those who received him, shows that they were thus filled not merely for their own sakes, but for the salvation of many others.

Being filled with the Holy Spirit in the sense now explained, was peculiar to the Apostles and the other first ministers of the Word, who thus preached the Gospel by immediate inspiration, and infallibly confirmed the truth of their doctrine by the miraculous works which they performed in the name of Jesus of Nazareth.

2. All the disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ possess this inestimable privilege, in the sense in which it is necessary for their present comfort, and their eternal salvation.

By the almighty and irresistible power of the Spirit of God, they are made disciples; for in relation to the conversion of the world—a work far beyond the power of human eloquence, or wisdom, or reasoning—his effectual operation is thus described by our blessed Lord: "When he the Spirit of truth is come, he shall convince the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment." He only is a Christian who is convinced, by the Spirit of God, that he is a sinner ready to perish; that he has been guilty of the highly aggravated sin of making God a liar, by not believing the record that God hath given of his Son; that the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ, or his obedience unto death, is all-sufficient to justify him in the sight of God, without any thing else to recommend him to the Divine favour, and that "whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord, shall be saved." This is that truth which flesh and blood cannot reveal, and of which the Spirit of God convinces all those whom he turns from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, enabling them to perceive the glory of the almighty Saviour, and the perfection of his atonement fully manifested by his resurrection from the dead, and his sitting down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.

Through this truth the Spirit of God also sanctifies. The whole work of regeneration is described by the Apostle Paul, and attributed to the Holy Spirit, when, after naming many wicked characters who shall not inherit the kingdom of God, he affirms of the Corinthian church, "And such were some of you. But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." The new birth is likewise ascribed to the same Spirit by our Lord himself, in his discourse with Nicodemus: "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." And again we are taught by his Apostle, that, "after the kindness and love of God our Saviour towards man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit, which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour."

In like manner, all the spiritual enjoyments and consolations of the people of God, depend upon the gracious, reviving, and sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit. He is the Spirit of grace, the Comforter, who shall abide with the disciples of Christ for ever. The God of hope fills them with all joy and peace in believing, that they may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Spirit. They are strengthened with all

might by his Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in their hearts by faith; that they, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that they may be filled with all the fulness of God. He is the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ Jesus, opening the eyes of their understanding, that they may know what is the hope of his calling; and he dwells in all true believers as the Spirit of adoption, teaching them to cry unto God, Abba, Father; and as the earnest or first-fruits of the heavenly and eternal inheritance, sealing them unto the day of redemption.

The Divine life in the soul is begun, and carried on, and perfected by the same Spirit, in all which operations he acts as the Spirit of truth, taking of the things which are Christ's, and showing them to his people.

As there is "one body," so there is "one Spirit," animating the whole of Christ's mystical body, giving it life and vigour, maintaining its union, which is declared to be "the unity of the Spirit," edifying this body, and making it "to grow up in all things unto him who is the head, even Christ." By the agency and divine influence of the Holy Spirit, believers maintain their communion with God. Thus "the fellowship of the Spirit" is mentioned as a distinguished blessing, and fervently requested in prayer, or pronounced in the form of a benediction. All Christian virtues are "the fruits of the Spirit;" and it is "through the Spirit" that believers "mortify the deeds of the body." In relation to the saving influence of the truth in all respects, the Apostle Paul affirms of the Corinthians, "Ye are the epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink, but by the Spirit of the living God, not in tables of stone, but in fleshly tables of the heart;" referring to the promise of the new covenant, "I will put my law in their hearts, and write it in their inward parts," in contradistinction from writing the law of the old covenant on tables of stone, and showing that writing on the tables of the heart is performed by the Spirit of the living God.

Were I to attempt a full consideration of this subject, it would lead me through the whole of the New Testament, where it is to be met with almost in every page. I shall only farther take notice of a few passages, where the truth which I am now establishing is very clearly stated.

The sacred historian affirms of the disciples in general, as I understand him, that "they were filled with joy, and with the Holy Spirit," Acts xiii. 52. From this it appears, that being filled with the Spirit in the latter sense, above explained, is the

common privilege of Christians. Of the same import is the affirmation of the Apostle Paul, "We have been all made to drink into the same Spirit," 1 Cor. xii. 13. A similar idea is presented to us in these remarkable words, "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit," Gal. v. 25. To live in the Spirit, and walk in the Spirit, are very strong expressions, and bring to my recollection the manner in which our dependence upon God for natural life is expressed; "In him we live, and move, and have our being." So with respect to spiritual life, there is no such thing among fallen men, except that which may justly be termed living and walking in the Spirit. Believers being in the Holy Spirit, or he in them, are expressions of similar import; and the latter frequently occur in Scripture. "If the Spirit of him who raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit which dwelleth in you," Rom. viii. 11. In fine, the bodies of believers are said to be "the temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in them, which they have of God," 1 Cor. vi. 19. No words could have expressed this truth in a more clear and decisive manner.

There are other passages of Scripture which have a respect both to the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit, and to his ordinary operations, of which all the people of God are the subjects. "The hand of the Lord was with them who preached the Word at Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, and a great number believed, and turned to the Lord." Indeed, whoever was the preacher, "God" upon all occasions "gave the increase." He did so by enabling his Apostles and others to speak under the immediate inspiration of the Holy Spirit with energy and boldness, which defied all opposition—by confirming the Word with miraculous works—and by the influences of his Holy Spirit on the hearts of those who heard the Word, bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. All these operations of the Holy Spirit are included when the Apostle says, "Our Gospel came not to you in word only, but in power, and in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance," 1 Thess. i. 5.

3. The exhortation relating to this subject makes it the duty of Christians to be filled with the Spirit; as it is likewise their duty "to abide in Christ, to build themselves up on their most holy faith, to pray in the Holy Spirit, and to keep themselves in the love of God."

In one respect, every thing of this nature is exclusively the work of God, who quickeneth whom he will, and who, by the refreshing influence of his Holy Spirit, cometh down on his people "like rain on the mown grass, as showers that water the earth." This "dew from the Lord tarrieth not for man,

nor waiteth for the sons of men." But when God promises many blessings to his people, and particularly that "he will put his Spirit within them," he adds, "thus saith the Lord God, I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them," Ezek. xxxvi. 37. And Jesus speaks in the same way to his disciples, "How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" "Ask then, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." Make it manifest to your own consciences that this is the habitual state of your minds, by importunity in secret prayer, and by waiting upon God, and seeking his face in his public ordinances, as you see them exemplified in the first churches.

How can you expect to be filled with the Spirit, if you have but slight impressions of the value of so high a privilege, if your souls never thirst for God, for the living God, and if you do not cultivate a state of mind suitable to this Divine enjoyment? No man can desire to be filled with the Spirit, till he be enlightened in the knowledge of the precious truth of the Gospel, and taught to glory in the cross of Christ alone; to love God supremely, to hate sin, and to delight in spiritual enjoyments and consolations, especially the hope of eternal life, for which the Spirit of God teaches all believers, "to groan in this tabernacle, being burdened; not for that they would be unclothed, but clothed upon with their house, which is from heaven, that mortality might be swallowed up of life."

Such persons will "offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." They will delight in praising him for his infinite mercy. And this is enjoined in connexion with being filled with the Spirit; "Speaking to yourselves in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord." Not that any one can be always engaged in devotional exercises, or in contemplating spiritual objects, or in speaking about the things of God. There is certainly much deficiency in those respects among many professors. But it is not right to imagine, as hath been insinuated by others who go to an opposite extreme, that all speech relating to worldly things is carnal conversation; for if that were true, their attention to lawful callings, and to many relative duties, would be employment fit only for carnal men. In devotedness to the service of God, there can be no extreme. But a believer is thus employed only so far as he is conscientiously engaged in the practice of every Christian virtue, and careful to avoid all that is offensive to God and hurtful to men.

He who is so engrossed with worldly concerns as in a great measure to forget the one thing needful, and he who is so much

occupied with religious exercises as to neglect the duties of life, are both acting a very sinful part. Neither the one nor the other can justly be said to be filled with the Spirit, who, by shedding abroad the love of God in the hearts of his people, confirms their hope, and fits them for every duty. If, therefore, they be remiss in any one thing that God hath commanded, this must be owing to some very opposite cause. Allowance may, and ought to be made, for a deficiency of natural talents necessary for industry and exertion, in some pious people. But carelessness about their families, and the state of their affairs, about keeping their word, or paying their just debts, ought never to be supposed to flow from piety, or in any good or pardonable sense to be occasioned by it. "All unrighteousness is sin," by whomsoever it may be committed.

They who attend to the exhortation, "Be filled with the Spirit," will be peculiarly careful to abstain from "the works of the flesh," which are enumerated Gal. v. 19—21. They will cleanse themselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, "perfecting holiness in the fear of God," lest they should "grieve the Holy Spirit of God, whereby they are sealed to the day of redemption." And if the church of which they are members can justly be considered as the temple of God, they will regard this awful threatening, "If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy." On the other hand, they will endeavour also to abound in all the fruits of the Spirit; for God's holy and gracious design in condescending "in very deed to dwell with men on the earth" by his Holy Spirit, is to conform them to his own blessed image. "He that loveth not, knoweth not God, for God is love. He that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him."

4. To guard against false ideas of being filled with the Spirit, it is proper to remark, that *the Scriptures of truth* are the means by which the Spirit of God uniformly operates on the minds of believers. "Holy men of God," who in ancient times committed the Divine oracles to writing, spake as they "were moved by the Holy Spirit;" and the "Spirit of Christ which was in them, testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." When the Apostles declared the fulfilment of these glorious things, "it was not they who spake, but the Spirit of their Father who spoke in them." The sacred Scriptures have been completed. Therefore no new revelations, no dreams, or visions, or private whispers, aside from the written Word of God, or additional to it, are now to be expected.

If, then, you would know whether you be really filled with the Spirit, you must bring all your experience to the test of Di-

vine truth. If the Spirit of glory and of God rest upon you, and dwell in you, he will establish you in the faith which, by the ministry of the Apostles, he once delivered to the saints, and sanctify you through the truth, producing in you all those fruits which the Word of God ascribes to his influence; and you will be able to give a reason from the Scriptures for all your peace, and joy, and hope, and for all your service of the living God. Any other sort of Christian experience is enthusiastic delusion, and may lead to the most dangerous errors, while its votaries are exposed to all the foolish imaginations of their own deceitful and wicked hearts.

Having thus endeavoured to show the import of "being filled with the Spirit," permit me to entreat you, as brethren professing the faith of Jesus, to avoid the one, and to desire the other, recollecting the absolute impossibility of loving both.

There is excess in drinking wine; but you cannot exceed in the Divine enjoyments and privileges which are communicated by the Spirit of God: your Lord says, "Eat, O friends; drink, yea drink abundantly, O beloved." But whatever produces any of the bad effects which I have justly attributed to wine, although the constitutions of some may be so strong as in general to resist these effects, yet that which usually produces them is excess; and also whatever is in any degree inconsistent with being filled with the Spirit.

I have likewise reminded you of the temptations to which you are exposed. The most effectual way of escaping all these, is your duly considering that "your bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit." The Apostle most conclusively reasons from this, that "the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord," and that "he who committeth fornication sinneth against his own body." May we not affirm the same things in relation to him who is drunk with wine, wherein is excess?

You are peculiarly called to be watchful against exceeding in the use of strong drink, because, though the crime is really great, it is too often an object of laughter and amusement, not in general of lamentation and abhorrence—because a very great proportion of those who, in this country, have been put away from the churches of Christ, have fallen by this enemy of the souls of men—because few, comparatively speaking, have been recovered from its destructive influence—and because it often deceives, and steals on imperceptibly by slow degrees. The deceitfulness of sin appears remarkably in this instance; and when any one falls under the power of this lust, there is no habit more enslaving.

If some of you be disposed in any degree to excess of wine, be alarmed. Trifle no longer. Take decisive measures. Break

through every difficulty. "Cut off the offending right hand; pluck out the right eye. It is better to enter into life maimed, or having one eye, rather than having two hands, or two eyes, to be cast into hell-fire."

Beware of self-confidence. Depend solely on the grace and strength which are in Christ Jesus. Labour to obtain a due sense of the fear of God, that you may say, when temptations occur, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" And remember that, in order to your mortifying this and every other lust of the flesh, you must be filled with the Spirit. Be alive to the infinite importance of enjoying so great a blessing, as it stands connected with obtaining eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

I hope it is unnecessary to make any other apology for thus addressing you with unreserved freedom, than to assure you that concern for your temporal and eternal welfare has constrained me to do so, and that I am, with sincere and fervent love, yours in the bonds of the Gospel.

Edinburgh, December 12, 1808.

ON THE PUNISHMENT OF DEATH IN THE CASE OF MURDER.

IN A LETTER TO THE EDITOR OF THE NEW EVANGELICAL MAGAZINE.

Your correspondent *Humanitas* has endeavoured to prove that the ancient law, "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed," is not of moral obligation; and this he has done with considerable ability. Permit me, therefore, to attempt furnishing your readers with an antidote against his specious but inconclusive reasoning.

He represents the law in question as having remained in force only from the time of the deluge till that of Moses; and as having operated while unrepealed with the same severity towards wilful murderers, and towards those who, by some accidental cause, might be made the unwilling instruments of extinguishing human life. The mere recital of this is sufficient to condemn it; for who can suppose that the just Lord, who cannot do iniquity, would inflict the well-merited punishment of murderers on those who, for the most part, are objects of sympathy rather than of blame?

A reason is assigned for this extensive and indiscriminating vengeance, namely, "the unpopulated state of the world at that time," on which account "the life of man must be care-

fully preserved," that the few persons in it after the deluge might "be fruitful and multiply," as the Lord commanded immediately after the denunciation of his wrath against murderers. But, granting that this were a just law, would it have had any tendency to preserve the life of man? Were we at present to take the lives of all man-slayers, we should add greatly to the list of criminals devoted to the gallows. Nor would the terror of suffering so severe a punishment, be in general the means of preventing those melancholy accidents; for in many cases unforeseen providential circumstances render them unavoidable; while it is obvious that granting unrestrained liberty to avengers of blood, instead of preserving the life of man, would give occasion to the death of thousands.

It thus appears, however, that *Humanitas* not only admits but overstrains the import of the law in Gen. ix.; for our own unbiassed innate sense of right and wrong must convince us that by "shedding man's blood," is there meant exclusively the malicious, wilful, and premeditated murder of a fellow creature; and our just and merciful Creator could never have promulgated any law respecting murder, which inflicted the punishment of death on persons innocent of that crime. He takes advantage of the general expression "shedding the blood of man," not considering that the punishment awarded, determines in the most conclusive manner what is intended by "shedding blood," nor perceiving that he puts an unfair construction on the Word of God. But he seems to have carried the matter to this extent, with a view to show that the institution of cities of refuge was a limitation of the absolute law in Gen. ix. 6; and he affirms that "the previous law was thus repealed and abrogated," while he admits that it still required the death of wilful murderers.

There was, it is true, no written law, so far as we know, to regulate the procedure of judges, and the sentiments of all men, in relation to man-slayers, till the Divine appointment of cities of refuge. "But we are sure that the judgment of God was according to truth," as much when he spake to Noah, as when he revealed his will to Moses; and it is truly astonishing that a sensible man, and one who professes to fear God, should be so far led aside by fondness for a favourite system, as to represent "Jehovah who changeth not," as in one age involving murderers and man-slayers in the same condemnation, and in another age commanding the one to be spared, and the other to be put to death!

Let it however be supposed, for the sake of argument, that during a period of 800 or 900 years, judges or private avengers could lawfully plead the authority of God for inflicting the

punishment of death on every man-slayer, what would this avail to the argument of *Humanitas?* The point of difference is not the punishment of him who "slays a man at unawares," but of him who maliciously kills a human being; and the whole procedure enjoined respecting those who might flee to the cities of refuge, ascertains beyond a doubt that death alone is, in God's account, the just temporal punishment of murderers. This will be apparent to every one who will read with attention chap. xxxv. of the Book of Numbers, where the law respecting those who claimed the privilege of man-slayers, is more fully detailed than in any other part of the law of Moses, though there are frequent references to this subject. Every case was to be judicially tried; the most accurate descriptions are given of murder and of manslaughter; all the circumstances were to be minutely examined, and scrutinized with anxious care; and the whole process was instituted for the express purpose of preventing a murderer from escaping the punishment of death. In the concluding part of the chapter, the ancient law is repeated in terms the most forcible which could have been used, "Whoso killeth any person, the murderer shall be put to death; but one witness shall not testify against any person, to cause him to die. Moreover, ye shall take no satisfaction for the life of a murderer who is guilty of death; but he shall be surely put to death. So ye shall not pollute the land wherein ye are; for blood it defileth the land, and the land cannot be cleansed of the blood that is shed therein, but by the blood of him that shed it." It follows, of course, "that the great value which God put upon the life of man" after the deluge, which is noticed by *Humanitas*, was the same in the time of Moses, and verily it is the same at this day, and will never cease till time shall be no more.

It is now incumbent on me to follow your correspondent to the New Testament, which I do with the utmost cheerfulness, being of one mind with him regarding the infinite dignity of the Author, the peculiar excellency and perfection of this part of Divine revelation, and the superior glory of the dispensation of Christ to that of Moses. But with all this in view, I cannot admit that we ought to take no aid from the Old Testament in relation to moral duty, unless the same duty be enjoined in the New Testament; or that the latter is to be considered in a detached and separate point of view, as "containing all things that are necessary to be either known or done." It is the glory of the New Testament, that it gives a faithful narrative of the fulfilment of all that was written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning Christ. We now find the types and shadows, and figurative representations of

the Old Testament fulfilled, explained, and substantiated in the glorious antitype, and in the spiritual blessings of his eternal kingdom. The connexion between the two great parts of Divine revelation, is close and indissoluble; and if we consult our own edification, we shall study both, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.

There are numerous references to the Old Testament in the doctrine of Christ and his Apostles on subjects of all kinds, particularly the moral law as delivered at Mount Sinai, which is frequently urged on the consciences of the disciples of Jesus, both in its letter and in its spirit and principle. The highest respect is paid by an inspired writer to the Scriptures of the Old Testament, when he says of these, which were the only Divine records then extant, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God (or the Christian teacher) may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." Moses and the prophets therefore, at this day, claim our strict attention and regard; and the more so that the vail is removed, and the former revelation of God now shines forth in all its native splendour, exceeded only, but not degraded, by "the glory which excelleth."

Besides, there are some moral duties which, in my opinion, cannot be satisfactorily proved to be such without reference to the Old Testament. Of these, I shall produce one instance, which appears to me exceedingly important. That "the Sabbath of the Lord," so far as it was a token of his peculiar covenant with the seed of Jacob, is abrogated; that the day is changed from the seventh to the first day of the week; and that the first Christians regularly assembled on the Lord's day to observe all the ordinances which he hath instituted in his churches, are facts clearly established in the New Testament. But it is more difficult to ascertain from it alone, that God now requires the sanctification of the whole day; and this is denied by some lawless Christians, who plead that no such thing is enjoined or exemplified. To set this matter at rest, therefore, it is necessary to refer to the first institution of the Sabbath, and to its re-enactment on the same grounds in the law of the ten commandments, both of which undeniably prove that it is of moral obligation, while the duty is enforced by the example of our great Creator working six days and resting one; and therefore, although the day has been changed, yet the duty cannot be abrogated as it respects either the days of labour, or the day of rest.

The present matter of difference relates to moral duty; and

it seems almost a hopeless task to use arguments on this subject with a person who denies that the law in Gen. ix., condemning murderers to death, was of a moral nature. What was it then? It was not typical; and I trust he will not say that it was political, as if the righteous Judge of all the earth had no other means of causing a few rational beings to be fruitful and multiply, so as to repair in this respect with sufficient rapidity the destruction occasioned by the deluge, except that of punishing some of them with death for the crime of manslaughter, where no murder was committed. Not being able to perceive any reason why it should be thought that awarding the just judgment of God to a murderer is not a moral act, nor why inflicting the same punishment on a man-slayer is not an immoral act, instead of reasoning on so plain a subject, I refer every man to the decision of his own conscience, being confident that, if he permit this monitor to speak, it will sufficiently plead my cause, which, indeed, is the cause of every human being.

There ought to be no greater difficulty about the indispensable obligation which lies upon all mankind to obey every moral precept, whether it be found in the Scriptures of the Old or of the New Testament. Indeed, this is acknowledged by *Humanitas*, who says, "If it (*i. e.* the ancient law respecting murder) should prove to be of moral obligation, then it will be obvious that it must be universal and perpetual; and that every legislature is bound to appoint it, and no other mode of punishment, for wilful murder." Still, however, he insists that this law is abrogated, because it is not re-enacted or broadly stated in the New Testament, while "he would presume that all which is of moral obligation upon Christians can be found there." If I be mistaken in this and other inconsistencies, which I confess their palpable nature leads me to suspect, I can at least say with truth, that I have not wilfully misrepresented him.

Authority cannot be produced from the New Testament in the precise form which he requires. But surely the God of the New Testament hath not permitted the earth to be filled with unrestrainable violence during the peaceful reign of the King of Zion, without an adequate remedy for the greatest crime which a man can commit. No, verily. He hath appointed civil powers "to be a terror to evil doers, and a praise unto them that do well." So universally true is this fact, that even wicked Nero is said to have sent governors to the various provinces of the Roman empire for those salutary purposes. This wonderful institution, by which good men and bad are employed to protect the just, and to keep the world in awe,

demonstrates that there is a God who ruleth in the earth. The civil power, acting thus by Divine authority, "is the minister of God to us for good;" and, for the accomplishment of this gracious purpose, "he beareth not the sword in vain; for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath on them that do evil," Rom. xiii.

At the same time, it is admitted that no specific directions are given in the New Testament with respect to the nature and extent of those punishments which ought to be inflicted on criminals, according to the just demerit of their various offences, though it appears beyond a doubt, that for this purpose they are vested with authority by the God of heaven, and of consequence that legislators, judges, magistrates, and, which is not the least important in this favoured country, jurymen, are accountable to God for every decision which they pronounce. They have nothing, therefore, to guide them in this particular, but the clearly revealed object which the Lord has in view in appointing civil rulers, their innate sense of right and wrong, the general principles of justice and equity, the hints given in the New Testament that death is the just punishment of murder, and the criminal code of Moses, so far as its enactments may not have been peculiar to the circumstances in which the ancient people of God were placed.

Private persons, in all the relative conditions of life, are often addressed in the apostolic epistles, and most of all, subjects of civil governors; yet, though the rulers of nations may also know their duty from the instructions given to their subjects, there is no personal address to them in their official capacity. Shall we therefore conclude that they are left to do as they please? Far be it. But deprived as they are of this advantage, for which it may perhaps be a sufficient reason that no supreme rulers were members of the first churches, they have the more need to regard all other Scriptural means of information, and deeply to consider that, if they make any thing less than death the punishment of murder, they do "bear the sword in vain," and cease to be "the ministers of God, and revengers to execute (his) wrath on them that do evil."

But let me not be mistaken, as if I approved of our own sanguinary criminal code in all its terrific forms. In many respects it has no affinity to the benign spirit of the Gospel, and it is offensive in a high degree to the best feelings and sympathies of our nature. To what precise extent the punishment of death ought to be carried, I pretend not to judge; but I very much doubt whether the mere loss of property by an injured individual justly entitles the public, in any case, to demand the life of the criminal.

Humanitas farther attempts to convince your readers that to punish even murder with death, is opposite to the Spirit of the Gospel, by referring to these words of Christ, "Ye have heard that it hath been said, an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth. But I say unto you that ye resist not evil, love your enemies, do good to them that hate you," &c. Matt. v. Here again it gives me pleasure that I cordially agree with his view of the doctrine of non-resistance, the evil of resentment or avenging ourselves, and our obligation to forgive all injuries, and to feed and clothe our most inveterate enemies, when their destitute circumstances require it; though I consider this as the duty of Christians, acting not in a public, but in a private and individual capacity; and I do maintain the lawfulness of self-defence in cases of unprovoked attack. I admit also that it is a criminal thing in Christian brethren to go to law one with another; nor do I hesitate to affirm, though this seems unconnected with the subject in hand, that eating blood has been always strictly prohibited from the time that animal food was granted, and is still forbidden under the Gospel.

What difference then, it may be said, is there between us? A very great one. The mistake of *Humanitas* seems to arise from confounding the duty of private individuals with that of the administrators of public justice, supposing that the latter as well as the former ought to do to the enemies of the public, that which, if they act as the disciples of Christ, they will be disposed to do to those who have injured them personally, not resisting evil, not retaliating by rendering evil for evil, but doing all the good in their power to their bitterest enemies. It will be seen at once that no judge can treat in this manner convicted criminals, who would thus be encouraged to multiply depredations and murders, till the whole nation should be utterly ruined.

The manner in which I have endeavoured to state private forgiveness and public vengeance, is strikingly visible in Rom. xii. and xiii. Some of the strongest, things which are any where to be met with in Scripture, are said against retaliation in the end of the twelfth chapter, "Recompense to no man evil for evil," &c. And immediately after, as if the Apostle had foreseen the bad use which some would make of this, he enforces in the most energetic terms the duties which we owe to "the powers that be," and the advantages which result to ourselves from their administration with all its legitimate terrors, representing them as armed with power by God himself, for the purpose of restraining the unruly, and punishing evil doers. The vengeance of the law is not, as *Humanitas* seems to think, that of private parties who may have been deeply injured. We

need to watch over ourselves, I confess, when placed in such circumstances. But it is surely possible for us to do all that duty requires of us, for our own and the public safety, without the smallest tincture of a spirit of vengeance, nay, with sympathetic feelings, and with deep regret. And I request my opponent to consider, what I suppose from his silence on the legitimate power of civil rulers, he has not yet duly appreciated—that the vengeance of good human laws, duly administered, is the vengeance of God himself; for it is written, as formerly quoted, "He (*i. e.* the power or ruler) beareth not the sword in vain; for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath on him that doeth evil;" and on this account all who are thus disposed, are commanded by the sovereign Lord of heaven and earth to "be afraid." Let him, therefore, beware lest he be finding fault with Divine vengeance, while he strongly reproves his fellow men for attempting to exercise this prerogative of the Almighty. There is some need for this caution, because he will not admit that death is the just punishment of murder, though God hath said, "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed;" and he considers all who maintain this as acting opposite to the spirit of love which breathes in the Gospel, as if using severe but lawful means to defend all mankind against the worst of criminals, were no part of that love which we owe to our neighbour, but the dire effect of malice and revenge!

Humanitas will now be pleased to return with me to Matt. v. In the remarks which he has made on verse 38, he includes "life for life," along with an eye for an eye, &c., because the former expression is in the context, Exod. xxi. But the omission seems to me to have been intentional; for Jesus had already finished what he meant to say with respect to murder and its punishment, ver. 21. "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment." He does not here correct, nor modify, nor apparently reverse "the saying by them of old time," as he does in relation to several of those which follow. He takes the sixth commandment in the precise form in which it was given, when it was written with the finger of God, and annexes to it the threatened punishment which was intimated to Noah, and often repeated, and strongly enforced in the Old Testament Scriptures; for it is obvious that the words, "Whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment," plainly express the punishment of death, being the only punishment which ever was threatened for that crime. And, instead of showing that there was any mistake in the ancient saying which might open the way

for evading the charge, or escaping the just punishment of murder, he does nothing but aggravate the charge, and extend the judgment which God had pronounced against this awful crime, by declaring that "Whosoever shall be angry with his brother without a cause, shall be in danger of the judgment," as a breaker of the sixth commandment, not in actual deed, but in the unrestrained indulgence of those inimical passions which are uniformly the cause of murder.

Jesus gives a similar illustration of the seventh commandment, charging multitudes with the crime of adultery, who, without reference to their having actually had unlawful intercourse with the female sex, have yet "in their hearts committed adultery." Thus it is that the great Preacher of righteousness displays the spirituality and extent of his holy law, and makes it reach our inmost souls.

How different, in the above respects, is his doctrine on the law of divorce, ver. 31, 32? He merely states the permission which had been given them to divorce their wives, and reverses it altogether, "saving for the cause of fornication," declaring that either of the parties, by marrying another, would commit adultery.

From these premises, or rather from the Lord's own illustration of the sixth commandment, we may safely conclude that the ancient preservative of the life of man, instituted by the Giver of that life, who best knows its value, and our natural and moral feelings in relation to it, is sanctioned and enforced by Him who "came not to destroy mens' lives, but to save them." It may not be improper to notice here a circumstance in the history of the Apostle Paul, which, incidentally as it were, is decisive of the present point of difference. When standing capitally accused before a Roman governor, he said, with a noble and undaunted spirit, "If I be an offender, or have committed any thing worthy of death, I refuse not to die," thus unequivocally denouncing some crimes as being worthy of death; and no one surely will take it upon him to say that he made any exception of murder.

And now, permit me to give you a hint? Probably you have admitted your correspondent's essay merely for the purpose of its being answered. Yet as you did not refuse to publish it, as it seems to have merited, would it not have been proper to have cautioned your readers against it, and to have invited a reply? *

* The following note is appended to the above article in the "Evangelical Magazine:"—"The Editor receives in good part the admonition of his "old" and much valued "friend"—stands reproved for his conduct, and is much obliged by the favour conferred on him in transmitting so able an illustration of this difficult and important subject.

But perceiving the regard which *Humanitas* expresses to other principles truly Christian, I am not without hope that he will seriously consider the preceding remarks, comparing them with the Word of God; and if this should produce a change of mind, I humbly and affectionately advise him to give his new sentiments the same extent of circulation as he has unhappily given to his present erroneous views. I trust he will pardon me for writing so freely.

EDINBURGH, MARCH 25, 1823.

THE INFLUENCE OF THE DOCTRINE OF DIVINE GRACE ILLUSTRATED, AND OBJECTIONS ANSWERED.

THE following remarks are intended as an answer to the objections which are with great zeal urged by many, against the doctrine that was taught the late William Mills, in the faith of which he died*—a doctrine which is now, as it was in the days of the Apostles, every where spoken against.

1. It is objected, That this doctrine levels all mankind; the most respectable moralist differs nothing from the hardened wretch, who is justly condemned to suffer death by the laws of his country; thieves and robbers are as good men as those who are sober, just, and temperate. Can any thing be more absurd than this? Is it not equally opposite to the plainest declarations of Scripture, and to all the principles of reason, justice, and humanity?

I believe it is as far from your intention as it is from mine, to lessen the crimes of any; and I am decidedly of opinion, that all men are not equally sinful. There are some who "have sold themselves to commit iniquity, whose consciences are seared as with a hot iron, and who work all uncleanness with greediness." Crimes which are hurtful to society, require to be punished; and those who suffer as murderers, thieves, and evil-doers, must of necessity appear more sinful in the eyes of men, than the sober and decent part of mankind. They are also criminal in the sight of God, in exact proportion to the

* This individual was executed at Edinburgh on 21st September 1785. Before his death his mind was in the most distracted state, in consequence of the self-righteous labours enjoined on him by the teachers of the popular doctrine of Christianity. But on being visited by the late Mr H. D. Inglis, one of the pastors of the Baptist Church then assembling in Richmond Court, a zealous and indefatigable labourer in the Christian vineyard, his mind received joy and peace in believing the doctrine of the atonement through the finished work of Christ, and he died rejoicing in the hope of the Gospel.

just demerit of their evil deeds. The most specious acts of injustice and oppression, which mankind in general practise with impunity, such as going beyond and defrauding one another in their dealings, shall not escape his notice; for he is the avenger of all who are thus defrauded. * Theft is a great crime in his account; for "the unrighteous, thieves, and covetous, shall not inherit the kingdom of God." † But, above all, a murderer is exposed to the vengeance of the Almighty; for while his law, as it respected human society in the kingdom of Israel, required only restitution from a thief, it declared, in the most express terms, "Ye shall take no satisfaction for the life of a murderer, who is guilty of death; but he shall be surely put to death." ‡

There is evidently therefore, in God's account, a difference in the demerit of crimes, both as committed against himself and against our fellow-men. This is manifestly implied in the doctrine we contend for. Do we not affirm, that there are many instances particularly noted in the Scriptures, of the vilest sinners being saved by the grace of God? And do we not also maintain, that his grace could not appear in all the lustre of its greatness, freedom, and sovereignty, if it did not save those who are, both in his account and ours, more heinous transgressors than their fellow-men, and deserve to be accounted the chief of sinners?

Yet men often judge, not according to truth, when they determine who are the greatest sinners in the sight of God. This depends upon a variety of circumstances, of which no cognizance is taken by human laws, such as, the motives of their hearts, which God alone can fully know, the opportunities they have had of being instructed, and the peculiar temptations to which they were exposed. At any rate, when this is possible, it requires more attention to the Word of God than most people are disposed to give to it; for the generality of mankind are guided more by caprice and custom, than by that unerring standard, in judging of the true demerit of crimes. It is not uncommon, for instance, to see blasphemers and adulterers joining in the general cry against thieves and robbers, insulting them, and loading them with reproach and infamy; while they do not consider that their own crimes are more highly aggravated in the sight of God, being such as he commanded to be punished with death in the kingdom of Israel. ‖

While, then, it is acknowledged, that some are greater sinners than others, this is no objection to the doctrine of the

* 1 Thess. iv. 6.
† 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10.
‡ Num. xxxv. 31.
‖ Lev. xxiv. 16, and xx. 10.

Scripture, which represents all men as involved by nature in one condemnation, and therefore equally needing that salvation which comes freely to the vile and worthless, through the blood of Christ, Rom. iii., Eph. ii. All are equally destitute of any just claim to the Divine favour; for "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." * The Psalmist says, "If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?" † Those who shall not stand when he marks iniquities, are not merely such as may be reckoned, in comparison of others, ungodly and profane, but all who have committed sin; for it is not said, if thou shouldst mark great offences, or uncommon and highly aggravated transgressions, but if thou shouldst mark iniquities, who shall stand? And again, "Enter not into judgment with thy servant, for in thy sight shall no man living be justified;" ‡ which agrees with the Apostle's declaration when treating of the same subject, "By the deeds of the law, there shall no flesh be justified in his sight." ‖

Are not all mankind thus placed on a level in point of justification before God? The same grace that saves the most profligate wretch in the world, is necessary to found the hope of those who plume themselves on their freedom from gross sins, and their comparatively blameless characters.

This will appear still more evident, when it is considered that the Scriptures represent all men, in their natural state, as "enemies unto God in their minds by wicked works;" § as "dead in sins;" ¶ the slaves of sin; ** "free from righteousness," and thus incapable of any thing but sin. †† The enmity of the hearts of men against God and his law, is expressed in different ways: in some, by such a desire of pleasure, riches, and honours, as is reputable enough in the world, but condemned by the Word of God; in others, these lusts become so prevalent, as to hurry them on to the commission of crimes which bring them to an untimely end; but the root of every evil is naturally in the heart of every man. ‡‡ And no one is prevented from the most daring acts of wickedness by the love of God, or a desire to glorify his name, till he is made to understand this joyful truth, that God is just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus; for thus alone is the enmity of the heart destroyed.

2. Another objection is, This doctrine leads to licentiousness. Profane sinners will be hardened in their guilt, by presuming

* Rom. iii. 23.
† Psal. cxxx. 3.
‡ Psal. cxliii. 2.
‖ Rom. iii. 20.
§ Col. i. 21.
¶ Eph. ii. 1, 5.
** Rom. vi. 17.
†† Rom. vi. 20, and iii. 11, 12, and viii. 7, 8.
‡‡ Matt. xv. 18—20.

that they may sin with impunity; for they are taught to imagine, that they have as good a chance for heaven as those who are virtuous and sober. Whatever course of life they pursue, they will be happy when they come to die; for, according to this doctrine, the grace of God is free to the worst of mankind, and is even magnified in proportion to the greatness of their guilt.

This objection is as old as the days of the Apostles; for some affirmed that they said, "Let us do evil that good may come." * An awful reply is made to this: "Whose damnation," says Paul, "is just;" implying, that those who drew such conclusions from the doctrine which he taught, exposed themselves to the utmost danger. He nevertheless, in that and the two following chapters, opens up the doctrine of justification through the righteousness of Christ alone, and sets forth the grace of God in all its riches, freedom, and sovereignty. He then asks, "Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?" † This thought he rejects with the utmost abhorrence: "God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" ‡

It must be allowed, indeed, that there were men in the days of the Apostles, "who turned the grace of God into lasciviousness;" and many such there are still. Of these Jude speaks, in language the most pointed and severe of any that is to be met with in all the Word of God, showing the hatefulness of their iniquity, and the certain destruction to which they were doomed. These are the most detestable of all characters. Whatever pretensions they may have to the knowledge of the grace of God, they are represented as "denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ." ‖—"They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and to every good work reprobate." § Professors of the faith are often reminded, not only of the danger of this, but also of unfruitfulness in the profession of the name of Christ. ¶ Those whom the grace of God, which bringeth salvation, hath not taught to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world,** have the fullest reason to conclude that they know it not; and even believers themselves, when they disobey any of Christ's laws, or become lukewarm and inactive, are thus alarmed and roused to a sense of their danger; for no

* Rom iii. 8. † Rom. vi. 1. ‡ Rom. vi. 2.
‖ Jude 4. § Tit. i. 16.
¶ Matt. vii. 21, to the end; John, xv. 1—6; 1 John, ii. 4; James, ii. 15, to the end. ** Tit. ii. 11, 12.

man has any right to esteem himself a believer of the Gospel, unless he now obeys the commandments of the Lord and Saviour, however much he may have formerly appeared to do so.*

Men may speculate about the grace of God; they may have distinct and accurate notions of the doctrine of justification through the righteousness of Christ, so as to enable them to speak fluently upon the subject, and perhaps also boast of their enjoyments, while they are totally ignorant of the true grace of God, as it gives relief to a guilty conscience. They never were pained with a sense of guilt, nor afraid of the just indignation of God; therefore, all the high-sounding expressions they make use of, about grace, have no meaning as to them. They see not how much they stand in need of grace, and thus it yields them no solid consolation or joyful hope. It is no wonder that the influence of what such men profess to believe, does not appear in their practice. The reason is plain, because, whatever they may say about it, they do not really believe. Let none therefore impute to the doctrine, that which is diametrically opposite to its nature and tendency, and arises solely from the corruption and hypocrisy of the hearts of men.

The nature of that salvation which we attribute to the riches of sovereign mercy, is such as to exclude the possibility of those who really enjoy it, being thereby encouraged in the ways of sin. It does not merely consist in freedom from condemnation, the enjoyment of the favour of God, and eternal glory; but deliverance from the power of sin is also an essential and important branch of this salvation. Those who now partake of that abundant mercy which is revealed in the Gospel, were predestinated to be "conformed to the image of Jesus Christ."† They are "elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ."‡ "He hath chosen them in Christ before the foundation of the world, that they should be holy and without blame before him in love."‖ All which passages, and many more that might be mentioned, evidently show that the purpose of God to save his people, equally respects their deliverance from wrath and from the power of sin. This is also one of the great promises of the new covenant: "I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts."§ And when "the Lord God of Israel actually visited and redeemed his people, and raised

* John, viii. 31, 32. John, xiii. 13—17; chap. xiv. 21, 24; chap. xv. 8, 9, 10, 14. 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10. Gal. vi. 3—10. Heb. vi. 4—12. 2 Pet. i. 5—11. 1 John, iii. 14, to the end.

† Rom. viii. 29. ‡ 1 Pet. i. 2. ‖ Eph. i. 4. § Heb. viii. 10.

up an horn of salvation for them in the house of his servant David," this was one part of his grand design, that they, "being delivered out of the hands of their enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of their lives." * This is also declared to be one of the great ends of the death of Christ; for "he loved his church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word; that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy, and without blemish." † This, too, is what God intends by all the blessings and privileges which he confers upon his people; for the reason given why "they are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, and a peculiar people," is, "that they should show forth the praises of him who hath called them out of darkness into his marvellous light." ‡ Thus, it is manifest that the doctrine we maintain cannot fail to purify the hearts of all who believe it, ‖ and lead them to perfect holiness in the fear of God; § unless the objectors can make it appear, that God's eternal purpose may be frustrated, that his promise may fail, that Christ is dead in vain, and that all the blessings which the Lord freely bestows upon his people, with the declared intention to make them holy, can only lead them to delight in sin. If these suppositions are profane, the objection which leads to them must be so too.

The doctrine which was declared to the poor criminal, must deeply impress the hearts of all who believe it with the most awful view of the malignity of sin, and the punishment it deserves; and is that alone, which can furnish with sufficient motives to obedience.

Was ever any such display given to men of the Divine indignation against sin, and the impossibility of its passing unpunished, as when the Son of God hung upon the accursed tree, and there expiated the sins of the ungodly? If it was necessary for the salvation of sinners that the Prince of life should be killed,¶ that God should bruise his own Son, put him to grief, and make his soul an offering for sin, ** doth not this loudly proclaim that he is the most holy Lord God? And must not those, who see his character thus displayed, serve him with reverence and godly fear, knowing that our God is a consuming fire? ††

There is also, in the cross of Christ, the highest possible

* Luke, i. 68, 69, 74, 75. † Eph. v. 25—27. ‡ 1 Pet. ii. 9.
‖ Acts, xv. 9. § 2 Cor. vii. 1. ¶ Acts, iii. 15.
** Isaiah, liii. 10. †† Heb. xii. 28, 29.

display of the goodness and mercy of God to sinners. His love, thus manifested, infinitely transcends all that is to be seen among men.* It is in this wonderful transaction, that we see him rich in mercy. † By this it is fully manifested, that God is love. ‡ And is it possible to discern this without loving him? "We love him," says the Apostle John, "because he first loved us." ‖ The stoutest and most obdurate hearts are thus subdued. This we know is the case even among men. Who would not love a kind and disinterested benefactor, especially if our own conduct had been such as led us to expect nothing but resentment? Much more surely will the hearts of sinners be filled with love and gratitude to God, when, conscious that they deserved nothing but wrath and destruction, he makes known to them the exceeding riches of his grace, pardoning all their sins, and filling them with the joyful hope of his salvation. If we thus love him, we must surely keep his commandments. § We must be constrained by the love of Christ, "to live not unto ourselves, but unto him that died for us, and rose again." ¶ Thus, believers of the Gospel are besought by the mercies of God, to the performance of every duty. ** They consider themselves not their own, but bought with a price; and therefore bound to glorify God in their bodies, and in their spirits, which are God's. ††

The unspeakable blessings they have already obtained, the forgiveness of their sins, peace with God, the spirit of adoption, and deliverance from all their spiritual enemies, must deeply impress upon their souls a grateful sense of the love of God, and lead them to think that they never can do enough for Christ. The hope of that life and immortality which the Gospel reveals, produces in them the very same effect; for, says the Apostle John, "Every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as he is pure." ‡‡ And Peter, when assuring those to whom he wrote of the coming of the day of God, the destruction of the world, and perdition of ungodly men, thus improves the subject: "Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness; looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God?" ‖‖ And again, "Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent, that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless." §§

* Rom. v. 7, 8.
† Eph. ii. 4.
‡ 1 John, iv. 8, 16.
‖ 1 John, iv. 19.
§ John, xiv. 15, 21.
¶ 2 Cor. v. 14, 15.
** Rom. xii. 1.
†† 1 Cor. vi. 20.
‡‡ 1 John, iii. 3.
‖‖ 2 Peter, iii. 11, 12.
§§ 2 Peter, iii. 14.

Is not this doctrine according to godliness? Doth it not powerfully enforce upon Christians every motive that can fill their souls with detestation of sin, fervent love to God, a fear of offending him, and an earnest desire to glorify his name?

As to that part of the objection which supposes that the doctrine of the grace of God, which levels all distinctions among mankind, will harden men in their guilt, from this consideration, that they have as good a chance for heaven as those who are decent and sober—I answer, the Word of God speaks nothing of any having a chance for heaven, but places this matter upon the surest footing, "He that believeth, shall be saved; he that believeth not, shall be damned." * The evidence of believing the Gospel has been already mentioned, which fully shows, that we consider none as partakers of the grace therein revealed, whose hearts and conduct are not regulated thereby. Such persons, therefore, have no encouragement to continue in that situation, which excludes them from the kingdom of heaven. And as to the hope of their being afterwards delivered by the grace of God, his Word declares to all, "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation." † The hardened sinner, who this day rejects the Gospel of salvation, may be consigned ere to-morrow to everlasting misery. ‡ Where, then, is the encouragement given to delay faith and repentance, in the hope of afterwards obtaining them, supposing it were possible for men to do so? But the true reason why they do not believe, is because they hate the truth; and they repent not, because they love their sins; and must not every one, who knows any thing of the Word of God, and the workings of the human mind, perceive that this situation is totally inconsistent with any wish, ever to obtain faith and repentance?

Let none, then, grudge salvation to this poor thief, from an apprehension that others will be led, by that which was the ground of his hope and joy, to injure their fellow-men; for not only would their enjoyment of this hope produce the very opposite effect, as hath been already shown, but it is also sufficiently manifest, that the most profane sinners are not easily induced to believe the same doctrine. Even they are affronted, if it should be supposed that they stand in need of free and sovereign mercy; they too, however foolish it may appear, must have in themselves a ground of glorying, so that, in this respect, there is no difference between them and their decent neighbours; both are perfectly agreed in opposing the grace of God.

* Mark, xvi. 16. † 2 Cor. vi. 2. ‡ Luke, xii. 20.

At same time, I readily acknowledge that there is more hope of openly profane and abandoned sinners listening to the Gospel of the grace of God, than those who plume themselves on their freedom from gross sins, and their outward sanctity and devotion. These last are fortified by a religious principle, against all that can be said to them about sovereign mercy, and can scarce be brought to allow that they are sinners; whereas the former lie open to conviction, and must, in some measure, be sensible, if they think at all, that they are justly exposed to the vengeance of the Almighty. Thus Jesus says to the Pharisees, who "trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others,* Publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of God before you." † The parable of the publican and Pharisee, shows also how much these self-righteous men are above being indebted to mercy, and how hateful they are on this account in the sight of God; whereas they, who, like the poor self-condemned publican, have nothing to say, but "God be merciful to me a sinner," ‡ are justified, and not the other.

Is it not unreasonable, in the highest degree, to exclude from the benefit of the Gospel those who are acknowledged by all to stand most in need of it? The outwardly righteous men among the Jews acted thus,‖ when the Saviour himself preached the glad tidings of salvation. They gave him this name as a term of reproach, "a friend of publicans and sinners," and often complained that he kept company with such persons, and even ate and drank with them. He owned the charge, but he gloried in it; and persisted in showing compassion to the most vile and worthless, saying, "The Son of man is come to seek

* Luke, xviii. 9. † Matt. xxi. 31. ‡ Luke, xviii. 10—15.

‖ I have considered this and the foregoing objection in their fullest extent, as they plead the cause of the most specious and devout opposers of the grace of God, whose conduct, in many respects, is irreproachable in the eyes of men. The answer will therefore apply with still greater force to profane swearers, drunkards, unclean persons, and suchlike; many of whom, on this occasion, have had effrontery enough to urge the same objections. To them it may be fitly said, "Thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest; for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things," (or things as manifestly excluding from the kingdom of heaven.) "But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them who commit such things. And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them who do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God? Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? But, after thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; who will render to every man according to his deeds."—Rom. ii. 1—6.

and to save that which was lost." *—" They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." † The very intention of his coming into the world was to save sinners, which would have been entirely frustrated, if such had not been called to repentance. Happy is it for sinners, that while thus excluded from mercy by their fellow-men, the Lord of heaven and earth hath openly acknowledged himself their friend, abasing the pride of those who glory in their own worth, and condemning all who grudge salvation to the very worst of men. It hath pleased him thus to magnify the riches of his grace, and who can say unto him, " What doest thou?"

3. There is still another objection of equal importance with any of the former, and that is, You make no account of repentance, contrition, and godly sorrow on account of sin, and lead people to think lightly of devotional exercises; for whatever you may say about these things, the strongest incitement to them is undoubtedly removed, when salvation is made to depend entirely upon the finished work of Christ, and no place is given to these exercises, as forming any part of a sinner's hope.

Nothing can be a greater mistake than this; for so far from setting aside repentance, prayer, and other devotional exercises, these can only be produced by the doctrine against which the objection is levelled. Men indeed, without any view of the atonement of Christ, may be convinced that they are sinners, and exposed to the wrath of a sin-avenging God. If these convictions are deep and lasting, their souls will be filled with slavish fear, and the most dreadful apprehensions of that wrath of God, which will undoubtedly come upon the children of disobedience: these, if not removed by a view of the mercy of God in Christ, or, which often happens, by worldly pursuits and amusements, will land them in absolute despair. A situation of this kind, or any thing that approaches to it, has surely no tendency to make any one draw near unto God, or humbly to confess those sins which he is convinced must bring upon him everlasting destruction. All his efforts, while in these circumstances, must be to ease his conscience, by persuading himself that he is not quite so sinful as he had been led to imagine, or by acts of devotion and greater strictness in his future conduct, to atone for his past sins; and, alas! he will find many to encourage him in this fruitless labour. Will this produce repentance, godly sorrow, and an ingenuous confession of sin? Are not all the attempts of men to please God in this

* Luke, xix. 7, 9, 10. † Matt. ix. 10—12. Luke, v. 29—33.

way, set in direct opposition to a full conviction and acknowledgment of their ruined, helpless, and miserable situation?

I mean not, however, to speak lightly of such convictions. The situation of those who labour under them is very moving, and claims the sympathy of all who, like them, have experienced the terrors of an awakened conscience, and have obtained that relief which the atonement of Christ alone is suited to give. The salvation proclaimed in the Gospel meets exactly the situation of those, to whom nothing presents itself from any other quarter but guilt, despair, and death. Indeed, this must be the case, in some measure, with all who are comforted by these glad tidings of salvation; for they have no meaning but in relation to the guilt and wretchedness of those to whom they are preached. Far be it from me, therefore, to say any thing that would have the smallest tendency to lessen the guilt of the most trembling self-condemned sinner; or, on the other hand, to mock his misery, by telling him, as some have done, that his convictions are self-righteous. Nothing surely can be more opposite to self-righteousness, than a full conviction in a person's mind, that he is the chief of sinners. The view he has of his sin and misery is just and proper, though he may greatly err as to the means of obtaining relief. Those who know the truth, should therefore set before him that all-sufficient remedy which God hath provided, whereby "he healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds." *

This was the course the Apostles followed; for when the convicted Jews "were pricked in their hearts, and said, Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Peter seems to have considered their question rather as expressive of their anguish and despair, than of any desire they might have to live by their own doings; for, without saying any thing of self-righteousness, he immediately answers thus: "Repent, and be baptised every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins;" leading them at once to that very Saviour whom they had crucified, for peace to their guilty consciences. † In like manner, when the jailer, trembling and astonished, fell down before Paul and Silas, and said, "What shall I do to be saved?" they do not reproach him with self-righteousness, but make known joyful tidings, as the only means of relief to a despairing guilty sinner: "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house." ‡ ‖

* Psalm cxlvii. 3. † Acts, ii. 37, 38. ‡ Acts, xvi. 30—32.

‖ I do not at all mean to insinuate, that a convicted sinner, or indeed any man in the world, is free of a desire to establish his own righteousness,

Such is the view I entertain of those convictions produced in the conscience by the law of God, which worketh wrath; but whenever people begin to imagine, that there is some sort of merit in their convictions, prayers, and tears; that their state is safe, because they are convinced and humbled; or that their hope depends on seeing their past guilt in a less formidable point of view, and resolving in future to amend their ways, they set themselves in direct opposition to the Gospel ground of hope, and thus become self-righteous. But is not this the most pitiful ground of hope that could well be imagined? Is it not strange indeed that men should thus boast of their convictions? We are naturally disposed to be proud of knowledge; yet surely, knowing that we are sinners, should have no effect but to humble and abase us. Can a man deserve eternal life, because he confesses that he is worthy of death? Is it not beyond measure inconsistent for such an one to plead any thing but mercy? It may be said, perhaps, that one who confesses his sins, is not such a hardened sinner as those who deny them; but what shall we say of his humility, if he so inverts the nature of things, as to build his hope of obtaining favour upon his conviction of those very sins, which are the cause of his condemnation, and ought only to fill him with shame and self-abhorrence?

There are, perhaps, few more hardened sinners in the sight of God, however decent they may be in the eyes of men, than those who thus boast of their humility. They are even more inconsistent than the ancient Pharisees, for a humble confession of sins was none of those things on which they founded their hope: they, on the contrary, thanked God that they were not as other men, which, if true, was surely a more rational footing to proceed upon, than the method pursued by those corrupters of the Gospel, who own that they are as other men, and by virtue of this acknowledgment think themselves entitled to mercy. It is therefore evident, that those who lay any

while ignorant of the way of peace revealed in the Gospel; but when we begin to distinguish characters, it must require something more than this, to denominate a man self-righteous in comparison of others; and surely conviction of sin is none of the things by which this character is marked out. Many of those Jews to whom Peter preached on the day of Pentecost, were, no doubt, men who gloried in their own worth; but was their self-righteous pride increased by their being "pricked in their hearts," and forced to cry out, "What shall we do?" It would be absurd to say so. They were then humbled to the dust, and fully persuaded that they had no claim to the favour of God, on account of the things in which they formerly boasted; and that they, above all others, had reason to fear the just indignation of God, as being the murderers of his beloved Son, and as "God had made that same Jesus, whom they had crucified, both Lord and Christ."

stress in this way upon contrition and godly sorrow, know nothing at all about the matter.

A man truly convinced of sin sees nothing between him and everlasting destruction, but the sovereign mercy of God manifested to guilty sinners in the atonement of Christ. When this sure foundation which God hath laid in Zion, presents itself to his view; when he sees that Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth, and that he hath redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of all his sins, no reason can strike his mind why he should then be anxious to conceal his guilt. He will confess it fully to the glory of that grace by which he is saved: he will confess his sins without reserve unto him who is faithful and just to forgive him his sins, and to cleanse him from all unrighteousness. Is not this a motive to repentance and godly sorrow, far more powerful than any other? Will not he who thus sees himself redeemed by the blood of Christ, be led to hate those sins which were the cause of the sufferings of the Son of God? Conscious that he lives by mercy, will it not be his daily employment to "come boldly to the throne of grace, that he may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need?" How then can such a person make light of repentance, devotion, and prayer?

The reason why God is so often represented in Scripture as delighting in a broken and contrite spirit,* dwelling with such,† and giving grace to the humble,‡ is because those who are thus contrite and humble, see nothing in themselves in which they can glory, and have all their hope in the blood of atonement; so that his dwelling with those who are humble and of a contrite spirit, is just the same with his taking pleasure in them that hope in his mercy. Nothing could be more absurd than to suppose it a meritorious thing to hope in free sovereign mercy, to which we have no claim or title; and it is equally so to imagine, that the deepest convictions of sin are any otherwise well-pleasing to God, than as they flow from a sense of his forgiving mercy, and lead us to have all our confidence in that grace which reigneth through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord. This is the true grace of God wherein we stand. May the Lord reveal it unto many, and fill them with deep repentance and godly sorrow, for the opposition they have shown to its freedom and sovereignty, manifested in saving the chief of sinners!

From the foregoing account of our principles, and these answers to objections, it will be evident to all who judge according to the Word of God, that we regard the glorious Gospel

* Psal. xxxiv. 18; and lvii. 15. † John, xv. 17. ‡ 1 Pet. v. 5.

of Christ, not only as it gives peace with God, and delivers from the wrath to come, but as it produces in all who believe it the deepest repentance and self-abasement, love to God, obedience to his commandments, and a strict attention to devotional duties. We cannot, therefore, justly be suspected of having any principle that would lead us to treat with indifference or contempt the convictions of awakened sinners, the experiences of the people of God, or zeal for the interests of practical godliness.

We indeed most peremptorily deny, that the hope of any one who believes the Gospel is founded upon such things. The most experienced Christian, after all he has enjoyed, and suffered, and obeyed, has nothing else to look to for pardon and peace, but the same glad tidings which are declared to all mankind without exception, and in which he at first rejoiced when on the brink of everlasting destruction. The hope of the Gospel, which strengthens, animates, and enlivens his soul, is the same that "is preached to every creature who is under heaven." * It was thus with the Apostle Paul; after all his labours, afflictions, and unwearied diligence in the service of Christ for many years; and though he had much experience of the love of God, patience in tribulation, and the joyful hope of eternal glory; yet neither his experience nor his labours are mentioned by him as constituting any part of the foundation of his hope towards God. In the most solemn manner he disclaims every thing else but the blood of atonement, when he says, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." † And to the believing Hebrews he thus writes, "We are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end." ‡

Yet we maintain with equal firmness, that no man can be a Christian, unless he is convinced of the evil of sin, the need he has of pardon, and the sufficiency of the blood of Christ for this purpose, leading him daily to approach unto God, "confessing his sins unto him who is faithful and just to forgive him his sins, and to cleanse him from all unrighteousness." ‖ Neither can any man be a Christian, unless he experiences, in some measure, the love of God shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Spirit, and lives by the faith of Jesus Christ, looking for his second and glorious appearing.

As the necessary effect of these enjoyments, a Christian is one who overcometh the world through the faith of the Son of God; § he places his chief delight in the enjoyment of God,

* 1 Col. i. 23. † Gal. vi. 14. ‡ Heb. iii. 14.
‖ 1 John, i. 9. § 1 John, v. 4, 5.

and makes every thing else subservient to this his main pursuit. It is his firm belief, that "one thing is needful, and he hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from him." * He gives a decided preference to the blessings of the kingdom of heaven, the service of Christ, and even to suffering with him here, in the prospect of future blessedness; when laid in the balance with all the riches, honours, and pleasures of this life. He is like-minded with the Apostle Paul, who said, "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ." † Here is an example of the true spirit of Christianity, which must appear in every believer of the Gospel, regulating the whole of his conduct. Being risen with Christ, "he seeks those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God; setting his affection on things above, not on things on the earth." ‡

The hearts of the disciples of Jesus, being thus set on obtaining the heavenly inheritance, and raised above the perishing things of time, their chief concern is to preserve upon their spirits a lively sense of the importance of eternal things, and to stand fast in the faith amidst all the opposition they meet with from the world around them, and from their own deceitful wicked hearts. They are careful to avoid every thing that would interrupt their communion with God, and "grieve his Holy Spirit, whereby they are sealed to the day of redemption." ‖ But they are sensible of much weakness, and many shortcomings in their duty, and are fully persuaded that they can only "work out their own salvation with fear and trembling, when God worketh in them both to will and to do of his good pleasure." § This leads them continually to have recourse unto him for that grace and strength which they stand in need of; to "pray always, with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and to watch thereunto with all perseverance." ¶ Thus Jude exhorts those to whom he wrote, as an antidote against the dangers to which they were exposed, particularly from ungodly teachers, who corrupted the Gospel of Christ: "But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." **

* Luke, x. 42. † Phil. iii. 7—15. ‡ Col. iii. 1, 2.
‖ Eph. iv. 30. § Phil. ii. 12, 13. ¶ Eph. vi. 18.
** Jude, ver. 20, 21.

These are Christian exercises, which require all the vigilance, exertion, and activity, of which the human mind is capable; and those only who are thus employed, by the animating influence of the faith and hope of the Gospel, deserve the name of Christians. Believers of the truth are represented in Scripture as "fighting the good fight of faith," * "running with patience the race that is set before them," † and "striving for the mastery;" ‡ which surely implies, that their whole hearts and souls are engaged in the religion of Christ, and that every thing else must give way to this grand object of their pursuit, the unfading inheritance, the incorruptible crown. Accordingly we find, that he who would run the Christian race, must "lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset him." ‖ He must "keep under his body, and bring it into subjection, lest he should be cast away;" § and he who would strive so as to overcome and obtain the crown, must strive lawfully, ¶ and be temperate in all things. **

In prosecuting this warfare, much experience is obtained by the disciples of Christ, both of their own ignorance, weakness, ingratitude, and rebellion; and of the Lord's infinite mercy in forgiving their sins, and of his almighty power in establishing their souls, and making them conquerors over all their enemies.

A great part of the New Testament is taken up in giving us an account of the experience of the Apostles and those who obtained like precious faith with them. It is of the utmost consequence to attend to this; for real believers of the truth are more distinguished from hypocrites and false professors, by the effects which the Word of God produces in their hearts and conduct, than by any difference in their knowledge; and it is thus that the Scripture guards men against self-deception, for it supposes that those who fall away may be enlightened; †† that they may have known the way of righteousness; ‡‡ nay, that at first they might receive the Word with joy;" ‖‖ and it gives us no infallible criterion whereby we may know that our faith is genuine, but our experience of its power to convince and humble us, to give us full relief and permanent joy, and to make us bring forth the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God.

Thus Paul gives an account of the experience of the Thessalonians, when he says, "Our Gospel came not unto you in

* 1 Tim. vi. 12.
† Heb. xii. 1.
‡ 1 Cor. ix. 25.
‖ Heb. xii. 1.
§ 1 Cor. ix. 27.
¶ 2 Tim. ii. 5.
** 1 Cor. ix. 25.
†† Heb. vi. 4.
‡‡ 2 Pet. ii. 20, 21.
‖‖ Matt. xiii. 20.

word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance." * The Gospel was not with them a matter of speculation or indifference: it came with power upon their hearts and consciences, while it was attended with the demonstration of the Holy Spirit, making known its import and its evidence; the consequence of which was, that they firmly believed it, for it came unto them in much assurance. This appeared by their "becoming followers of the Apostles, and of the Lord, having received the Word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit." † They found all their happiness in this Word. It made them joyful in the midst of sufferings for its sake, and led them cheerfully to become "companions with the Apostles in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ." ‡ He also says to these Thessalonians, "When ye received the Word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but (as it is in truth) the Word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe." ‖ The evidence of this he likewise mentions, which was, their becoming followers of the churches, and suffering persecution for the sake of the truth. §

Instances of this sort might be multiplied without end, but we must now come to a conclusion. In general we may observe, that the history given us of the first Christians in the New Testament, is a description not of worldly, but of regenerated men. They were converted by the power of the Word of God; they were born again by this incorruptible Word, ¶ and actuated by motives, hopes, and principles, entirely new, and opposite to those which influenced their conduct when they knew not God. They were men under the lively impressions of eternal things, and "had their conversation in heaven, from whence they looked for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ." ** Though burdened with a sense of sin, and groaning to be delivered, †† they were assured of their interest in Christ, and joyful beyond expression even in a state of suffering and distress; for it is said concerning them, that "though they were in heaviness through manifold temptations, they rejoiced in Jesus Christ with joy unspeakable, and full of glory." ‡‡ They were happy without any outward visible cause, nay, in such a situation as would have made all men miserable but themselves.

* 1 Thess. i. 5.
† 1 Thess. i. 6.
‡ Rev. i. 9.
‖ 1 Thess. ii. 13.
§ 1 Thess. ii. 14.
¶ 1 Pet. i. 23.
** Phil. iii. 20.
†† Rom. vii. 23. 1 Cor. v. 2, 4.
‡‡ 1 Pet. i. 6, 8.

This account of Christian experience will no doubt differ very considerably from the views of many professors of religion in our day, some of whom pay little attention in any way to experimental Christianity, and others think that nothing deserves the name of experience, but those deep exercises of mind which keep them always in darkness and perplexity, refusing the comfort which the Gospel affords to the most trembling guilty sinner, and labouring to obtain relief by means of their repentance, devotion, or some good thing towards God, which they expect to find in themselves. They cannot think of coming to Christ, guilty as they are, but must be prepared and qualified for receiving him; and so they labour all their lifetime to obtain an interest in Christ, "ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth." These are the persons who are esteemed by many the most experienced Christians; yet they seem more to resemble the Israelites on Mount Sinai, than those who "are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem;" * for these last "have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but the spirit of adoption, whereby they cry unto God, Abba, Father." †

It may be thought that the account here given of Christian experience carries it too high, that the situation of the first Christians was some way different in this respect from ours, and that such comforts cannot now be enjoyed by those who believe. But where is the difference? Is not the Gospel the same in all ages? Doth it not present to the view of Christians now, the same object of hope that filled the hearts of those ancient believers with such unspeakable joy? And must not the truth, when it is really believed, produce the same effects now, that it did in the days of the Apostles? Christians may depart from God, and lose their relish for the Gospel, and their enjoyment of that blessed hope which it reveals; they may become lukewarm, and leave their first love, even while they continue strict in their outward conduct; ‡ and in so far as this is the case, till they again become zealous and repent, they cannot be free of the spirit of bondage. But those who are habitually in this state of mind, have reason to fear that they are not Christians at all; and that if they continue "lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, Christ will spue them out of his mouth." ‖

Let all, therefore, who wish to enjoy true Christian experience, carefully peruse the New Testament, and observe what were the effects produced by the Word of truth on those who

* Heb. xii. 18, 22.
† Rom. viii. 15.
‡ Rev. ii. 2—4.
‖ Rev. iii. 15, 16.

first believed it. Let them examine their own hearts and conduct, as in the sight of God, before whose judgment-seat they must soon appear, and see if the Gospel has produced the same effects on them, and if they are now living by the faith of the Son of God, and acting as his faithful servants. Thus shall they be able to determine whether they are believers of the same truth, or empty, formal, and hypocritical professors of the name of Christ.

I shall now conclude this publication, earnestly entreating all sorts of men to consider their situation in the same point of view as the Word of God represents it, and as it shall soon appear at the judgment-seat of Christ; and in this accepted time and day of salvation, not to harden their hearts, but approach to that Lord who is rich in mercy to all that call upon him.

EDINBURGH, NOVEMBER 5, 1785.

ON THE SONG OF SOLOMON.

IN A LETTER TO THE EDITOR OF THE EDINBURGH EVANGELICAL MAGAZINE.

IT is to me a matter of deep regret, that some professing Christians incautiously join with infidels and scoffers, in considering the Song of Songs as descriptive merely of human love. A paper of that sort appeared some time ago in your Magazine. Soon after its publication I read it once, and only in a cursory manner, because it was far from being agreeable to my taste or judgment, and I do not mean to peruse it again, or to take any further notice of it. You may perhaps think this a strange introduction to a few remarks, intended as an antidote to the paper alluded to. If we would maintain the truth, it is impossible to avoid controversy while error is propagated in the world. But the cause of truth is not in general promoted by attacking individual persons, and criticising perhaps with equal severity their unguarded expressions and their erroneous sentiments. Their pride is hurt, their resentment is excited, and the contest too frequently turns out on both sides a struggle for pre-eminence in critical investigation and subtle reasoning. I rather choose, with your approbation, to assume the privilege afforded to all, of simply stating my own opinion, not scrupling, however, to show the pernicious tendency of bad doctrine.

In the various attempts which have been made to explain the Song of Solomon, there are two extremes. On the one hand, some have discerned in it nothing more than the union and love of an earthly husband and his spouse; and to this inferior subject they have endeavoured to accommodate all the glowing images, the bright descriptions of the most fervent and transporting mutual affection, with its longings, its languishings, and its reiterated efforts to obtain possession of the beloved object; and the high, overpowering, and ecstatic enjoyments of love, with which this beautiful Song abounds. One would think it might be easy to convince any serious Christian, that a just esteem of lawful wedlock is not the only effect that is likely to be produced by thus limiting the scope of this Divine Song.

They who suppose that a whole inspired book has been written solely with a view to celebrate the mutual love of Solomon and one of his queens, may feel temptations to impurity, which never could have occurred if they had regarded it chiefly as descriptive of the union which subsists between Christ and his redeemed people. The importance of the subject solemnizes the mind, and banishes from it all those carnal ideas which might otherwise be suggested by many tender and passionate expressions. After all, the figurative representation of Christ as the husband of his church, honours and sanctions the marriage relation, infinitely more than the most intoxicating things that can be said of its union and its endearments.

To set aside the spiritual meaning of the Song of Solomon, is not more unfriendly to chastity than it is to godliness. It is no favourable symptom that we delight in God; that we esteem the blessed Jesus "the chiefest among ten thousand, and altogether lovely;" that we are duly sensible of the languid and listless state into which we are apt to fall; or that we earnestly desire to be revived, and to enjoy communion with our exalted Lord, if the difficulty of explaining every thing in this sacred book, or the ingenuity of perverse reasoners, or the scoffs of infidels, shall induce us to believe that it doth not testify of "him of whom Moses, in the law and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." Nor will the adoption of such a sentiment add any thing to our spiritual-mindedness, the fervour of our devotional exercises, our desire after the enjoyment of God in this life, and our hope of being "presented as a chaste virgin to Christ" in the life to come.

Nay, I must be permitted to go a step farther, and to affirm, what I seriously believe, that such unworthy explanations of the Word of God, tend directly to deism. It would be more easy to convince a thinking person, who is not well

established in the faith of the Divine oracles, that the Scriptures which record a love song, not intended to convey spiritual instruction, cannot be the Word of God, than to persuade him to believe that, while language highly figurative is used, and the glory of Solomon displayed, "a greater than Solomon is here." For this song is replete with lively representations of the most earnest desire and love. It contains the most enthusiastic personal admiration, the most mournful and heart-rending complaints of absence, and the most passionate description of the joy which the spouse obtained when she "found him whom her soul loved, and held him, and would not let him go, till she had brought him into her mother's house, and into the chamber of her that conceived her." The more extravagant these tokens of love appear to Christians, when applied to earthly objects, the more, I am persuaded, will they be disposed to reckon them descriptive of what we owe to the church's husband, who is justly entitled to the highest degree of admiration, gratitude, and love.

On the other hand, many well-meaning Christians have gone to a great extreme in spiritualizing the Song of Solomon. The figures have been strained. Bold metaphorical expressions have been too minutely explained, and applied to Divine subjects; and persons, venturing to go beyond what is written in other parts of the Word of God, have soared into the regions of fancy without any guide, and entertained themselves and others with many conceits for which there is no foundation in the Song, or in any part of Divine revelation. By endeavouring to find out the exact spiritual meaning of every expression, and to apply every verse and every clause to the connexion which subsists between Christ and his church, they lessen the dignity of the subject, and sometimes expose it to ridicule. Their own art and ingenuity appear conspicuous, but their remarks are impious; and for the most part they contribute little to the illustration of Divine truth. With all due respect towards expositors of the latter class, who are far less dangerous than those of the former, I would humbly advise them to take a more general and comprehensive view of the spirit and design of the Song in question, to explain it by other passages of Scripture, which unquestionably represent the union of Christ and his church under the idea of marriage, and, where they cannot find parallel texts, to attempt no explanation of metaphorical expressions in the Song, or to do it with modesty and self-diffidence, and in a manner worthy of a subject which, without controversy, is unspeakably great and glorious.

That the song of Solomon is a marriage song, and that the enjoyments of virtuous love are described in it, I have not any

doubt. Nor am I at all disposed to controvert the opinion of those who think that it had a respect to the marriage of Solomon with the daughter of Pharaoh. All that I contend for is, that, on whatever occasion it was penned, and however clearly it describes some of the best enjoyments of human life, it is principally intended as a figurative representation of a spiritual, an indissoluble and eternal marriage, not similar in all respects to the earthly figure, yet fitly and strikingly pointed out by it.

There is no reason surely why we should startle at this view of the Song, on account of its being eminently figurative; for there are in the Sacred Scriptures innumerable examples of the same kind. Perhaps bolder figures are not to be found in any part of the Song of Solomon, than those used by the Apostle Paul when treating of the same subject, Eph. v. 30. "We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." Indeed, the objection is stronger against the exclusive application of the Song of Songs to Solomon and his queen. "A head like Carmel, a nose like the tower of Lebanon, a neck like the tower of David builded for an armoury, whereon there hang a thousand bucklers, all shields of mighty men," seem rather unnatural descriptions of a delicate and beautiful woman. Nor is it easy for us to conceive how it could be justly said of her, that she was "terrible as an army with banners," though this applies well to the church of Christ. See Micah, v. 8. It seems equally impossible to account for Solomon's favourite queen being exposed to such barbarous treatment from his watchmen as that complained of, chap. v. 7. "They smote me, they wounded me; the keepers of the walls took away my vail from me." Or to conjecture how it could happen that she would dare to resist the entreaties of Solomon, and to refuse him admittance, when he addressed her in the most tender and affectionate manner, ver. 2, 3. Yet there is no difficulty in applying all this to the spouse of Christ, who has often been cruelly used by those who ought to have protected her, and who in her turn has too frequently become indolent and lukewarm, and treated her Lord with neglect and ingratitude, amidst all his kind entreaties and expostulations. See an example of this in Rev. iii. 14, to the end, particularly verse 20, which is exactly parallel to Song v. 2, "Behold I stand at the door and knock. If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me."

It must be confessed, indeed, that there are many things in this Song, which cannot be literally applied to Christ and his church. But it is enough for my purpose, if it can be proved that "the testimony of Jesus," delivered by himself and his

inspired Apostles, is the spirit of the Song of Songs, which from its very name we are led to expect. In the greater part of the figurative and typical representations of the Old Testament, there are some things which apply more directly to the type, and others to the antitype. To give instances of this would be superfluous; many of them will be recollected by all who have read the Scriptures with attention. The Song of Solomon is singular, though perhaps not entirely so, in this particular, that it contains descriptions which it would be extremely difficult to apply strictly and literally, either to the figure or to the thing signified. But it is easy to discern the spirit, that is to say, the meaning and design, the main scope and tendency of the whole, which is summed up in these words, "*Blessed are they who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb.*"

These hints, imperfect as they are, might suffice to convince any sober-minded and candid enquirer. But the importance of the subject still urges me to a farther discussion of it, which however must be delayed till some future period. I intend, if the Lord will, to send you a summary of a few additional arguments, by which it appears to me that the general view of the Song of Solomon for which I plead, is completely established.*

ON THE ASSURANCE OF HOPE, &c. &c.

IN A LETTER TO ———.

Your three letters lately received, contain an avowal of your agreement with Mr Walker in various particulars, and accusations against the church in ———, of unbrotherly conduct towards some of their members. You will excuse me for taking no farther notice of the latter, till I hear the party concerned, which I think is in all cases an essential requisite for preventing unrighteous judgment. As to your other charges, in these I feel myself implicated, and called upon to say something in reply, not merely for my own justification, but that I may do what in me lies to vindicate the truth of God, and if possible, to convince you that the situation in which you have suddenly placed yourself, is one of much guilt and danger. The strong and peremptory way in which you express yourself, gives me no great encouragement; but a sense of duty, fervent Christian love, and an earnest desire to promote your best interest, remove every obstacle, and leave me no alternative.

* It does not appear that the author ever fulfilled the intention here expressed, as no additional paper upon the subject occurs in the Magazine from which the above is taken.

In a confident style of writing, very different from that of your former letters, you affirm that Christians in all situations ought to observe the Lord's Supper, as well as prayer and other ordinances, without hinting at any argument in favour of this practice which has not been often refuted, or referring to any text of Scripture; and it would be giving you and me unnecessary trouble now to repeat the opposite arguments, and to prove them by the authority of the Word of God. Did you ever hear of a Christian husband and his wife, in the time of the Apostles, keeping at home on the Lord's day, and there partaking of the Lord's Supper? Or, is there any instance on record of brethren withdrawing from a church of Christ on any ground? I shall only take particular notice of one of your assertions on this head, which I think you will not justify. You say, "Nothing can have such a tendency to perpetuate corruptions in the churches, as the opinion that elders are necessary to enable disciples to obey every Divine institution." Has not this the appearance of throwing a stigma on the Divine appointment of elders? For, if there had been no such institution, the supposed source of corruption would not have existed. And what evil is there in maintaining, that, where the office itself is not, other things dependent upon it must be wanting, unless we should suppose that the Lord has appointed a standing office in his churches for the sake of mere form, and not for the accomplishment of any valuable purposes? In their absence, how can disciples "obey those who have the rule over them," or reap any benefit from their "oversight and watching for their souls, or esteem them highly in love for their work's sake," &c. &c. Impute corruption, if you will, to elders being put out of their due place, and to the misconduct of pastors themselves; but consider the institution itself as pure and spotless, and the plea that many things are wanting where it does not exist, as corresponding with every just idea of the wisdom, and faithfulness, and mercy of our heavenly Father.

"Whenever," you say, "a person is called upon publicly to unite in prayer and praise, he is called upon also to observe the breaking of bread." This I suppose you apply merely to assembling on the Lord's day. But why *publicly?* Do you not plead for doing the same thing *in private?* "They are both of the same Divine obligation." This is most certainly true; but what should hinder its being the will of God "that men pray *every where*," and that, in an organized body of Christians, and there only, they should partake of the bread and the wine as the visible body of Christ?

You attempt to justify your withdrawing from a church, on the ground of "disciples being commanded to withdraw from

every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of the Apostles," 2 Thess. iii. 6, as if the Apostles had commanded *believers* to separate from one another in their public worship, in opposition to " their standing fast in one spirit, with one mind," &c. " The tradition," referred to, is fully explained in the following verses, in which the Apostle strongly reprehends those among them who were disorderly, " working not at all, but were busy bodies;" reminding them of his former command, expressly in relation to this, and now again he repeats the same command, and directs the church in general how they were to act: " If any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed," evidently meaning, ' Give him no countenance in his idle sauntering way; hold no conversation with him when he ought to be otherwise employed; tell him to go to his work, and that, if he will be idle, it shall not be in your company, that thus he may be ashamed, and apply himself to his honest calling.' This explanation is confirmed by the following words, " Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him *as a brother*." To exclude him from the church, is surely not to admonish him *as a brother;* and it is at least equally inconsistent to say, that you admonish a church *as brethren* by entirely forsaking them, and by refusing to join in prayer with all or any of them. Here I must plainly say, that Mr Walker perverts this text, as often as he adduces it in support of his mode of separate worship, and as a ground of saying even to acknowledged believers, " Stand by thyself; come not near to me, for I am holier than thou." It is worthy of remark that many of those who endanger the holiness of the truth, by an extreme and unscriptural definition of self-righteousness, " despise others;" and that those who carry visible separation in worship to an extent unknown in the Scriptures, instead of thereby uniting real Christians among themselves, as is manifestly the Lord's design, produce only disunion in this respect; and so extensively, that two persons whom I esteem, and whose present situation I deplore, cannot find another in the great city of London, who is accounted worthy to join in their addresses to the God of heaven! Of this, verily *they* have cause to be ashamed before God and their Christian brethren. " Wot you not what the Scripture saith of Elias?"

I am extremely sorry to observe that you have adopted Mr Walker's capital and most dangerous error, by which I mean his doctrine of the assurance of hope. You affirm that in the church of ——— " the saints are taught to maintain their peace with God, not by the truth itself, but by their gracious tempers

and dispositions," and you deny that "the assurance of hope is obtained and preserved by taking cognizance of the fruits of faith." The former sentiment, I think, would not be declared by the persons whom you accuse; for they know that, "being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." You must therefore have put your own construction on their words, though it may be that neither they nor I have always expressed ourselves with strict propriety on this very delicate subject. It is not, however, my object to free them from censure, but to defend that which I understand to be the doctrine of the Scriptures.

Most cordially do I agree with you, that the finished work of Christ is the only and all-sufficient foundation of a sinner's hope, and that the most eminent saint on earth has no other ground of glorying; from the moment when his guilty soul was thus relieved, till he close his eyes in death, he lives the whole of his life in this world by the faith of the Son of God. That which supports his soul, and gives him confidence in drawing near to God—which leads him to expect daily forgiveness—which procures him peace, joy, hope, and all the blessings of the everlasting covenant, is simply and solely that precious truth which is preached to every creature under heaven, and which saves the most guilty wretch who believes it. He never can be in circumstances which require him not to say, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Were all true believers uniformly in this state of mind, they would experience, more than they often do, the blessedness of the man whom the Lord chooseth and causeth to approach unto him; they would be filled with the fruits of righteousness, and possess Scriptural evidence that they are called, and chosen, and faithful.

But surely the Word of God does not authorize all who *profess* the faith of God's elect, to be assured that *they* are now in a state of salvation, that they shall never fall away, and that they shall ultimately receive the end of their faith, even the salvation of their souls, whether they be fruitful or unfruitful; whether they perfect holiness in the fear of God, or live in sin; whether they be lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, or hearken to the rebukes and chastisements of the Son of God, and are zealous therefore, and repent. While you think it a fatal error to maintain that, by the sanctifying influence of the truth, "the corrupt nature of man becomes daily less corrupt," and thus seem to affirm that believers are as much under the power of sin as other men, you will of course admit that your own heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. How then can you be sure that you are a true believer, without any other evidence than that which is furnished by a heart

deceitful above all things, or by your inward consciousness that you certainly do believe the Gospel? And I know not on what principle you can say with confidence, that you shall never perish, if you be not equally confident that you believe; for "he that believeth not, shall be damned." Some farther evidence, therefore, than the soundness of a man's creed, and his favourable thoughts of what passes in his own mind, must be necessary to lead him to conclude with safety and without a peradventure, that he shall be saved.

The truth of these general remarks is confirmed by many things in the Scriptures. The Apostle James makes light of that man's pretensions, who saith "he hath faith and hath not works." He puts a question upon this, of which it requires more than a superficial knowledge of the Word of God to judge fairly. "Can faith save him?" And, when he still continues to boast of his faith, he tells him, "The devils also believe and tremble." The Lord Jesus sets before us an awful spectacle, when he represents "many saying unto him in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name?" &c. To whom he will say, "I never knew you; depart from me," &c., condemning them, not for the unsoundness of their profession of faith, but for their want of those fruits by which his true disciples are distinguished; as appears from the preceding and following verses, in Matt. vii., from his solemn account of the judgment, Matt. xxv., and from many other passages. Indeed, the Word of God is full of this doctrine, and no description is given of the future judgment, which does not either express or imply that professors of the faith, as well as all other men, shall be judged according to their works. Yet vain men, who would be wise, try to persuade us that we ought not now to judge ourselves by this rule, and that we are in no danger of "thinking ourselves to be something when we are nothing, deceiving our ownselves," though this admonition should be neglected. "Let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another; for every man shall bear his own burden." Nay, they would have us to believe, that if we be so occupied we deny the faith!

In the Word of God, also, Christians are often called to the exercise of cautious fear: "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief," &c. Let us therefore fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief. "Thou standest by faith; be not high-minded, but fear. Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." All these refer to the example of Israel, who

came short of the promised rest through unbelief, and were overthrown in the wilderness; and also were at last given up to judicial blindness and hardness of heart, when the kingdom of God was taken from them and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. But there are likewise many examples in the New Testament, of professors of the faith drawing back unto perdition; some of them corrupting the doctrine of the Gospel, or holding tenets totally subversive of it; others led aside by fleshly lusts, and returning with the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire; others overcome by the love of money, who wishing to be rich, drowned themselves in destruction and perdition. Even Demas, a fellow-labourer of the Apostle Paul, forsook him, having loved this present world. Shall we hear all this, and much more which time would fail me to recount, and confess, with much contrition for what is past, our liableness to fall before temptation, and yet say that we may possess the assurance of hope, by presumptuously entertaining a good opinion of ourselves, without reference to Christian tempers and dispositions, or to a conversation becoming the Gospel?

There are, besides, many declarations in Scripture expressly affirming that for which I plead. In the first epistle of John, "written to believers, that they may know that they have everlasting life," the Apostle affirms, Hereby we do know that we know him if we keep his commandments. Whoso keepeth his Word, in him verily is the love of God perfected. Hereby know we that we are in him. We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. Let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth; and hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him; for if our hearts condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God, &c.

You take notice of Heb. vi., "We desire that every one of you do show the same diligence, to the full assurance of hope unto the end;" and 2 Pet. i., "Giving all diligence, add to your faith, virtue," &c. "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure; for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall," &c. So saith the Spirit of God; and the words are plain, forcible, and determinate. They may be tortured by the ingenuity of man, but they will speak to the consciences of those who tremble at the Word of God; they will pierce even to the dividing asunder of the soul and spirit of him who lacketh these things, if he be not absolutely and irrecoverably blind; and they will comfort true disciples so long as they forsake not their own mercy.

It appears to me that these quotations admit only of one

rational sense; namely, that taking cognizance of the fruits of faith, is inseparably connected with truly enjoying the assurance of hope. Indeed, privilege and duty are never disjoined in the Word of God. "They who walk in the fear of the Lord, walk in the comfort of the Holy Spirit. When we live in peace, the God of love and peace shall be with us. When we are careful for nothing, &c., the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, will keep our hearts and mind through Christ Jesus." And Jesus himself says, "He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me, shall be loved of my Father," &c. It is a vain and fruitless task to attempt making our calling and election sure, without living in the exercise of the Christian virtues, and abounding in the work of the Lord; not with a servile spirit, but from the motives of love and gratitude. Do you not admit that there is such a thing as grieving the Holy Spirit of God, and that if we Christians live after the flesh, we shall die?

You object against all this, by asserting that my views are contradicted, as you think, by Matt. xxv. 37, 38, and Heb. iii. 14. But if your reference to the former text were just, by which I suppose you mean that believers in this world are unconscious of doing to the Lord himself that which they do to his brethren, it would follow, that none of them can be at all engaged in this service of Christ, which yet he promised to reward; that a cup of cold water was never given to one of his little ones *in the name of a disciple*, and that the greatest labour of love must lose its reward, because on your principle there is no labour of love to his name. And as to the latter text, it says nothing to your point; for it refers simply to our holding fast that which is the ground of our confidence and hope, not leading us surely to this impious confidence and defiling hope, that the impure in heart and life shall see God.

You remark also on Heb. vi., and 2 Pet. i., that the assurance of hope is not a state (which I do not understand,) "but the common privilege of all the saints." If you mean that it is attainable by all, I agree with you. But certainly all do not actually possess it. You add, it is their privilege "*whilst they are preserved abiding in the truth, and walking in the fear of the Lord.*" This is giving up your principle, and expressing full agreement with me. Stand to this and I shall be happy, and require of you no farther concession. Only it seems proper to add, that there will be always in churches persons who are strong and weak in the faith; and perhaps also, those who are strong in a bad sense, and therefore termed unruly. And this will be so much the worse, if the latter boast of the assurance of hope —this must tend to make them fearless sinners, and so totally

ungovernable. Well do I know the unchristian temper and ungodly conduct of such persons. But you have as yet had no experience of the bitter fruits produced by your principles. These I have seen among loose and regardless men in this place, who most unjustly called themselves Bereans.

But something opposite to the close connexion of the fear of the Lord with the comforts of the Holy Spirit, falls next to be considered. You complain of those who affirm "that believers become progressively meet for heaven; including, of course," you say, "the idea that the corrupt nature of man becomes daily less corrupt, opinions in opposition to the plainest testimony of the Sacred Scriptures, Rom. vii., Col. i. 12., Gal. v. 17., and opinions, wherever they are thoroughly imbibed, completely subversive of the hope of the Gospel." Now I fairly acknowledge that meetness for heaven is stated in Col. i. 12, as a thing past and not future; consequently, that all the people of God, so soon as they are called to the faith, partake of this meetness. How else could we understand the gracious answer which the thief on the cross received from the dying Saviour. But this does not invalidate "the notion," that sanctification is, or ought to be, progressive; and that human nature becomes less corrupt in those who know the truth, "who increase in the knowledge of God, whose faith groweth exceedingly, whose charity aboundeth, who grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who increase more and more in brotherly love, that the Lord may establish their hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, who grow up in all things unto him who is the head, even Christ, whose path is the path of the just, which, as the morning light, shineth more and more unto the perfect day," &c. &c. No more, I think, is necessary to convince you of your mistake, though I confess that in many cases the motion is retrograde instead of being progressive; the latter alone, however, is the will of God, and the influence of the saving truth, while the uniform doctrine of the Sacred Scriptures abundantly shows, that the former is totally inconsistent with any just pretensions to personal assurance; nay, that "if any man draw back, my soul (saith God) shall have no pleasure in him." And every man draws back who ceases to keep the commandments of God, though he may still profess to have the faith of Jesus.

Two things are necessary to make a corrupt and guilty human being meet for the inheritance of the saints in light, namely, that he should be reconciled to God by the death of his Son, and made a partaker of the Divine image; and, surely, the more he is thus "transformed from glory to glory," the

more he is made meet for the heavenly Jerusalem, into which no unclean thing can enter.

You have not done well in quoting Rom. vii. and Gal. v. 17, to prove that human nature in one who is alive unto God, who has his fruit unto holiness and the end everlasting life, is as corrupt as it is in him who is dead in sins and wallowing in the lusts of the flesh; or that the former cannot acquire, by the influence of the sanctifying truth, more freedom from sin, and more conformity to God than he now possesses. He who duly maintains the energetic struggle described in these two passages, will make progress in the Divine life, and at last obtain the victory which the Apostle Paul anticipated. If we resist the devil, he will flee from us; if we make no provision for the flesh, it will starve; if we resolutely abstain from fleshly lusts, they may still war against our souls, but they shall be foiled; if we unsparingly mortify the deeds of the body, we shall live; if we incessantly, and with undaunted courage, fight under the banners of our victorious Lord, we shall not fall in the combat. In all things, how threatening soever their aspect may often be, we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.

But what is the effect of your principle? Why, it is on the one hand self-confidence the most daring and presumptuous, and, on the other, a dastardly giving up of the cause which you declare to be untenable and hopeless. You merely *look* at the field of battle—you say a lion is there, ravenous beasts go up thereon, appalling enemies are found there, and you flee without either attacking or resisting your deadly foes. You even decline putting on the harness; and yet against all reason you boast, as he who put it on with modest firmness succeeds, and putteth it off with triumph! Nay, you declare opinions such as I have expressed, to be thoroughly subversive of the hope of the Gospel! The Apostle John affirms that every man that hath this hope, purifieth himself even as the Lord is pure. And you pronounce such purification to be morally impossible, and represent all attempts of that nature as implying a denial of the hope itself!

I might use many other arguments, supported by the authority of the Word of God, which never gives any man credit for a profession of faith, or hope, or charity, unless this be accompanied with the corresponding fruits. But I have already enlarged beyond proper bounds, and I shall only farther remark on this head, that a just view of the whole evidence which the Sacred Scriptures require to prove that our faith is genuine, and that we do not merely say to Jesus, Lord, Lord, whatever use we may make of it, has in itself no tendency to move

us away from the hope of the Gospel; on the contrary, it tends to establish us in the firm belief, that "other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ." So the Lord himself expressly says, "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God. This, as well as the first effects of the truth in illuminating the benighted soul, convincing and humbling the proudest rebel, furnishing him with a healing balm for his wounded spirit, and filling him with joyful hope, gives him an experimental evidence of the Divine origin of those words of eternal life which Jesus spake. And when we insist that the fruits produced by faith are evidences of its genuine nature, what do we mean to establish? Not that we have whereof to glory before God; for, assuredly, the work of faith and labour of love can never flow from that spirit. But our desire is to ascertain this great point by all the means which God hath prescribed, that we really do believe the testimony which God hath given of his Son; that, as those who profess this humbling faith, we have ceased to glory in any personal qualifications; and that we glory only in the Lord; for we are deeply convinced that such persons alone are capable of bringing forth the fruits of righteousness. We wish to be satisfied that, while we seem to be religious we deceive not our own hearts; that our religion is not vain; and that we really are partakers of the true grace of God. The doctrine which sets aside all this, I consider as the very essence of Antinomianism, which appears to me, in some respects, the worst of all principles, singularly base and ungenerous in its nature, and completely opposite to the whole of Divine revelation.

Permit me now, my dear brother, to give you a solemn and affectionate warning. On receiving your first letter, I loved you sincerely and fervently for the truth's sake. You were then in an unsettled state of mind, and I was glad when I afterwards heard of your joining a church of Christ, where I trusted you would find edification and comfort. Now again, I find you in the former state, for I am not so confident as you are that your sentiments are now unalterably fixed; but I am more deeply concerned about you than before. Still, however, I consider you as an erring brother, whom it is my bounden duty to exhort and admonish. I beseech you, therefore, that you receive not the grace of God in vain; that while you extol that grace, and probably think that very few beside yourself know any thing about it, you do not misrepresent and dishonour the grace of God which bringeth salvation, by disjoining it, in the minds of believers, from all its practical effects, as if God meant to save his people from misery, and not from sin; and, above all, that you consider the awful danger to yourself,

of resisting all that is testified in the Word of God concerning the necessity of your attending to the practical evidences of your own faith in Christ, and the means whereby you are directed to make your calling and election sure.

You blame yourself for "giving up to the weight of human authority, aided by the successful arts of Satan, the sentiments in which you are now confirmed, and of which you were partly convinced some time ago." And to what authority do you now yield? So far as I am able to perceive, you are now disposed to follow Mr Walker; and this I would by no means say, had he taught you nothing but the pure doctrine of the Scriptures; for certainly men may be instrumental in leading us to observe and to understand what God hath revealed. But he has taught you various things, which, as I have endeavoured to show, are opposite to the Word of God, and has led you far astray. Whether he be aided by Satan or no, I cannot say; but sure I am, that his contemptuous treatment of little ones who believe in Christ, his splenetic temper, and some material parts of his doctrine, are not of God.

Allow me to recommend to your serious perusal Mr M'Lean's Notes under the article *Faith: Commission*, Pp. 74 to 107. The various and opposing sentiments respecting the assurance of hope, seem to me judiciously and fairly treated in these Notes. And I request your particular attention to his strictures on John Barclay's doctrine, Pp. 92, 93, 103, 104. Will you bear with me if I tell you as a faithful friend, who wounds without breaking, the head, that you need such instruction as that which, of all the men I ever knew, Mr M'Lean was the most capable of giving; for, with all my respect and attachment towards you, I really think that you have rashly and confidently written on subjects which you but very partially understand. This, I can honestly say, proceeds not from resentment, nor envy, nor any other inimical passion; nor yet, I trust, from that of which, at least on this occasion, I am more in danger—the pride of knowledge and experience. Remember also, that you lately gave me full permission to treat you in this manner.

The church with which I am connected, will not lose sight of sending out itinerants, if they can only find qualified brethren in whom they can have full confidence. The difficulty lies there.

Please accept my thanks for your great attention and friendship to my nephew. Your kindness will be gratefully remembered by all his friends; and it may be satisfactory to you to be informed, that you have caused the widow's heart to sing for joy.

May I ask the favour of you to show this letter to Mr B. and Mr J. I am very desirous of this; but I am not entitled to require any thing opposite to your own inclination and feelings. I shall be extremely anxious to know the state of your mind, after farther deliberation. Meanwhile, hoping that you will yet again refresh my spirit in the Lord, I am, &c.

A SCRIPTURAL VIEW OF CHRISTIAN SALUTATION, CONTAINING THE SUBSTANCE OF TWO DISCOURSES ON ROMANS XVI. 16.

INTRODUCTION.

That the duty which I have attempted to illustrate in the two following discourses, is commanded and exemplified in the New Testament, admits of no doubt; yet less attention has been paid to it than its importance, and its intimate connexion with brotherly love, seem to deserve. Indeed, I have never seen it discussed at any considerable length, except in a recent publication by Mr Walker, late of Dublin, now residing in London, who proceeds on a gratuitous supposition, that a weekly form is established by a Divine precept, which merely enjoins mutual salutation. And he refers to no example of a periodical form, except that of the primitive fathers and their disciples, after the apostolic age; nor to any thing in nature, or in sacred writ, which is analogous to such a form.

It may be proper, therefore, to attempt a farther illustration of the arguments by which the principle maintained in the Discourses is established, and more expressly to mark some of the consequences which may be expected to flow from converting a sign of love into a matter of form.

Complete evidence, it is thought, has been given in the following pages, that salutation by a kiss is essential to the nature of man—that those only who are knit together in the bonds of love and friendship are the proper subjects of this propensity —and that even *they* are not constrained by nature to indulge it without a suitable occasion, which produces in them an unusual degree of tender sympathy, and other kind emotions of sincere and fervent love.

On what other ground could we perceive the fitness and pro-

priety of the Divine precept enjoining Christian salutation? While the disciples of Christ see nothing else to which it can have any reference but the changing customs of the world, or while they scruple to admit that the precept itself leads to the consideration of that which nature dictates, and for which there can be no artificial substitute, they give occasion for a doubt respecting the perpetuity of the Lord's commandment. True, indeed, his precepts admit of no challenge, and are all holy, and just, and good, though we should not be able to perceive, with regard to some of them, in what respects they tend to his glory, and to our spiritual advantage. But I hesitate not to affirm, that the supposition of necessary ignorance on our part is totally unfounded; and that our obeying commandments we know not why, would be altogether different from the "reasonable service" which God requires.

There is not, in all the New Testament, a precept or a prohibition for which we can give no reason, or wherein we do not perceive a wise and gracious design, provided our minds be "spiritual," and thus capable of "judging or discerning all things." This remark applies to all positive institutions, as well as to laws which are moral in their own nature, none of the former being dark and inexplicable, nor yet arbitrary in any other sense than that of their flowing from the sovereign good pleasure of God.

It is therefore competent for us to enquire into the nature as well as the import of the precept in question, that we may "do the will of God from the heart," and in the full possession of that love which we profess to exercise towards our brethren; thus accomplishing the intention of God in giving us this precept, and many illustrations of it in his Oracles of Truth.

Beside the notices in the Discourses respecting the seemingly disproportioned length of that part of the second head which describes various instances of Scriptural salutation, it may be necessary to anticipate an objection which is not there formally answered. The reader may thus object,

Why should you give so particular a description of the good conduct, and the mutual endearments of love which appear in the history of a number of persons who lived many years ago? Your professed object was to give a Scriptural view of Christian salutation. But a small part only of your narrative has any reference to the point in hand. The far greater part of it seems a digression, and intended rather to move our feelings than to inform our judgments, or to give us sober and just ideas of this important subject.

In answering this objection, I may be permitted to assure the reader, that nothing could have been farther from my in-

tention, than an attempt to blind the judgment of any person by a moving appeal to his feelings. Of this indeed all may be convinced, by considering the manner in which the narratives are given. It has been my endeavour to let the Scripture speak for itself, and to avoid every thing extraneous, and all artificial colouring. True indeed it is, that I have gained by this procedure; for no mode of representation, nor any paraphrase of which I am capable, could have borne a comparison with the simple, and impressive, and, it may well be added, the inimitable statements of the sacred historians. But it may be candidly admitted that to do this, is to do no more than to show becoming reverence for the Word of God; and that no person can be justly blamed for "showing that which is noted in the Scriptures of truth," unless he appear to be influenced by a sinister motive, or some irrelevant and foolish designs.

At the same time, I most freely confess that a mere reference to the fact of certain persons having saluted each other on various occasions, would have been very far indeed from answering my purpose. The evil of which I complain is, that many of those whom I sincerely love, have disjoined salutation from almost every circumstance by which it ought to be characterised; at least they do this when they attend to it as a periodical form. And it did not seem possible to present this subject to their view in all its own attractive beauty, without bringing forward, *in the language of inspiration*, the particulars which are evidently intended to show us the very hearts of those who were thus employed, and to convince us that we ought to be in some degree like-minded with them, when we engage in the same duty.

If the propriety of attending to the historical facts indicative of the state of mind which led to mutual salutation be not perceived and admitted, my labour will be in vain. For the consciousness of certain essential qualities of our nature which are exemplified in the cases here referred to, and in all their details, form a leading, and what appears to me an unanswerable, part of my argument. In this view of the matter, not one sentence will be found in any of the narratives, which does not strikingly bear upon this subject, except that respecting the pedigree of David king of Israel.

There is another point which is worthy of serious consideration. The reader will find a hint given respecting the danger of losing a just impression of what is meant by the Christian brotherhood, by attending to a periodical form, bearing none of the marks of that distinguishing love which ought to subsist among Christian brethren.

No duty is more frequently enjoined on believers of the Gos-

pel, in the Word of God, than love to one another as mutual partakers of free salvation through the name of Jesus. The peculiar nature of this love, its fervency, and the wonderful source from whence it flows, are most emphatically described by the Apostle John, 1 John iv. 7—12, and ver. 16, "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him."

It is worthy of remark, that in this passage alone we find an expression so eminently descriptive of the character of God in its most amiable point of view, but which, if it had not been contained in Divine revelation, we never could have dared to use, namely—that "God is love!" It is noticeable also, that this singular and highly interesting expression occurs twice, and both times in reference to the love which subsists among the children of God—once when repelling the claims of those who do not love—"He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love;" and once for the purpose of showing from whence all true love is derived, and that the possession and exercise of it, from the motives urged by the Apostle, is the best evidence of knowing the grace of God in truth—"God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him."

The same things are presented to our view when we read the new commandment which Jesus gave to his disciples, immediately before his agony in the garden, and his bearing their sins in his own body on the tree. "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." His love is represented as that which kindles theirs, as the pattern for their imitation, and as the distinguishing mark of his true disciples.

That love which claims so high an origin, and is demonstrative of the saving influence of the Word and Spirit of God on the hearts of those who believe the Gospel, is never compared in Scripture to any love known amongst men, except that of near relatives and bosom friends. But it is often illustrated

and enforced by the love which subsists among the dearest friends; parents, children, and more frequently brethren of the same family. The latter term is peculiarly suitable, as denoting equality in the family of God; and it is in reference to this circumstance that Jesus cautions his disciples against accepting of pre-eminence, or usurping authority, in his kingdom; "Be not ye called masters: for one is your master even Christ, and *all ye are brethren*."

For evident reasons, conjugal attachment, though it belongs to the nearest connexion in life, bears no part in this comparison. But a more illustrious monument has been erected to the honour of the first and the most intimate of all human ties; for "the Church's maker is her husband, whose name is the Lord of Hosts. He hath loved her, and given himself for her; she is now espoused to one husband, even Christ," and in due time shall appear "as a bride adorned for her husband, and shall be called to the marriage supper of the Lamb."

Agreeably to the above remarks, and to a variety of similar observations more fully stated in the following Discourses, it appears to me that a manner of salutation which would not be acceptable among brethren according to the flesh, is not only an offence against that which love requires in this particular instance, but also inimical to the general exercise and to the true spirit of love. If we can allow ourselves to give our Christian brethren a token of love which ought to call forth all our energies, in a manner so cold and unanimated, has not this an evident tendency to make us perform other duties of love in the same formal and lifeless manner?

Were any of us, from a sense of propriety, or from a mere conviction of duty, to give one of our brethren, under peculiar circumstances of distress, a formal call, similar to that which often happens in the general intercourse of society, and neither by suitable words, nor by a kind and affectionate manner, to express our sympathy towards him, nor to make any attempt to pour the balm of consolation, with which the Word of God abundantly furnishes us, into his wounded soul, could we say that this is to "remember them who suffer affliction as being ourselves also in the body, or to weep with them that weep?" Yet, so deceitful is the heart of man, that such an one might suppose that he had done his duty, because he had actually visited his afflicted brother.

This is an extreme case, but such as may occur; and there may be great deficiency when there is not a total want of Christian sympathy, as there may be also in the performance of all other active services of love. We ought never to forget that a Church which the Lord commended for "her works, and

her labour, and her patience, nevertheless had left her first love," and was reproved, and threatened, and at last deserted, by "Him who walketh in the midst of the churches."

Surely, then, we ought to beware of maintaining any principle, or persisting in any habit, which has a tendency to render the essential duty of love of less importance in our estimation, and to endanger at least the partial neglect of "the *work* and *labour* of love," which is intimately connected with knowing experimentally that "God is love, and that he who dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him."

DISCOURSE I.

"SALUTE ONE ANOTHER WITH AN HOLY KISS."—ROM. XVI. 16.

THE interesting subject of Christian salutation, in the course of lectures on this epistle, has come in my way; and I shall therefore now give what appears to me a Scriptural view of it, faithfully, and without reserve, hoping for your indulgence. And if you hear with candour, divesting yourselves of every prejudice, and trying all that may be spoken by the infallible standard of Divine truth, you will then fulfil my utmost wish. To act under these impressions, directly tends "to join us perfectly together in the same mind and in the same judgment;" and you know "how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity."

I propose to consider the subject under the following heads:—

I. The nature and import of this precept.

II. Its universal obligation in all ages, and in every country where the Gospel is received.

III. On what occasions it ought to be observed.

IV. Replies to the leading arguments for periodical salutation in churches.

V. Conclusion.

I. Let us begin with the nature and import of this precept. These appear at once from the designations which are uniformly given to the Christian salutation by the Apostles of Christ—"an holy kiss, a kiss of charity"—intimating that it flows "from the holiness of the truth," and from "love to one another for the sake of the truth which dwelleth in us, and

shall be with us for ever." This influence of the Gospel on those who believe it, is clearly described by the Apostle Peter, when he says to those who had obtained like precious faith with himself, "Seeing ye have purified your souls by obeying the truth through the Spirit to unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently," 1 Pet. i. 22. Their guilty selfishness, their ungodliness and worldly lusts, formerly rendered them incapable of either feeling or expressing this pure and fervent and undissembled love. But now the enmity of their carnal hearts was subdued by an infinite display of the love of God, and their old man was crucified with Christ, who groaned and bled and died for them. This was the first effect of their being reconciled to God by the death of his Son; and the next, without a moment's interval, was love to one another, in imitation of the love of Christ to them. This peculiar love, therefore, cannot be exercised by worldly men who are ignorant of all its motives, nor by Christians, except towards those who appear to be "fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God." And where this love does not really exist, a visible token of it, however endearing in itself, is nothing, and worse than nothing; for it must proceed either from hypocrisy or self-deceit.

In the "purity of heart," which is required as essential to Christian love, must be included a prohibition of every thing which relates, in thought, word, or deed, to unlawful intercourse between the sexes, against which there are many cautions in the Word of God. One of these is peculiarly applicable, as it has a reference to close and intimate conversation between males and females, where entreaty is recommended, and rebuke forbidden. "Entreat the elder women as mothers, the younger as sisters, *with all purity*," 1 Tim. v. 2. To apply this to the present case—If there should be any approach to filthiness, or foolish talking, or (foolish) jesting, of which, however, I am not aware that there is any ground among us to complain, a salutation combined with such circumstances would be a lie against the truth of the Gospel, for it is "the doctrine which is according to godliness." When the salutation is promiscuous—and this, on proper occasions, is not only allowable, but indispensable, that the unity of the body of Christ may be consistently maintained, and that all may have an opportunity of obeying the commandment of their Lord and Saviour—in such cases, men salute women with precisely the same sentiments and feelings as those of men saluting men, or women saluting women. This remark, so far as it regards indiscriminate salutation, applies with equal force to high and low, rich and poor, bond and free, among whom there is no dis-

tinction in the sight of God, nor any preference with respect to the blessings of the Gospel.

As holiness is essential to the Christian salutation, so also is love, not on account of the ties of blood, or habits of intimacy and friendship arising from similarity of dispositions and pursuits, or any thing that relates to this present life, but as mutual partakers of the blessed hope of salvation through Jesus Christ. We cannot, however, form a just idea of this salutation, which rests on spiritual grounds, without considering what love in certain circumstances dictates to all who are susceptible of its joys and griefs, its hopes and fears, its sympathies, and gratulations, and complacencies. For it surely cannot be admitted that salutation among Christians ought to be a less real, or a less visible token of love, heartiness, and familiarity, than it is among beloved earthly friends. If a cold and distant form in exchanging this tender and delicate expression of love would be displeasing in the latter case, such it must necessarily be also in the former case, to all who duly respect the common feelings of human nature, and perceive to what extent the love of God calls for the sanctified exercise of those feelings; while, on the other hand, it is fully granted that all the endearments of spiritual fellowship form no excuse for overstepping the limits of genuine modesty, respect, and deference.

Such, then, appears to be the nature and import of the precept enjoining this Christian duty. There is no ground for supposing that the churches were ignorant of it till they received the epistles wherein it is enjoined. They could not refrain from saluting those whom they fervently loved, nature itself taught them this; and there is no reason to doubt that the Apostles, when present with them, both taught and exemplified this sign of love. Nor is the smallest hint given, which should lead us to suspect that they had begun to neglect this practice. It is very improbable that they would be less attentive to this outward expression of love than the world around them were, among whom it was generally practised. The spirit of the duty, however, might decline, while the outward form remained; and therefore the Apostles not only reminded them of this as of all other duties, but led them deeply to consider that salutation among Christians is "a holy kiss, a kiss of charity." The immovable basis on which this precept stands, is the truth by which we are saved, and the whole of its superstructure is holiness and love; for "the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned."

II. It is now incumbent on me to show the universal obli-

gation of this precept, in all ages, and in every country where the Gospel is received.

With respect to this we shall obtain the most complete satisfaction, if we be willing to hear, and to obey the plain and simple testimony of the Word of God. The salutation is enjoined five times in the apostolic epistles to the Churches, viz., in the Epistle to the Romans; first and second Epistles to the Corinthians; first Epistle to the Thessalonians; and in the first Epistle of Peter, near the conclusion of each of these Epistles. In all these places, salutation by a kiss is expressly mentioned. I think also that the same thing is more briefly enjoined, Phil. iv. 21, "Salute every saint in Christ Jesus." Now, if this had been only once commanded, in terms so intelligible, so peremptory and decisive, that it is impossible to affix to them any other rational meaning, this should have been quite sufficient to procure the cheerful obedience of all who tremble at the Word of God. If, however, the Scriptures had given no farther light upon the subject, there might still have been some doubt at what times and seasons we ought to salute the brethren, concerning which not a single hint is given in any of the precepts; but the absolute certainty of the duty being required of us on some occasion, is unquestionable.

Nothing which has even a specious appearance of argument, so far as I know, has been urged against complying with this precept, excepting only that which is taken from the customs and habits of different countries. In the apostolic age, and in those parts of the world where the Gospel was first preached, the fashionable mode of showing kindness was salutation by a kiss. Here it is otherwise, for in general we manifest our friendly disposition towards any person by shaking hands with him; and therefore, say the opposers of Scriptural salutation, a kiss in the land of Judea, and other places, 1800 years ago, signified nothing more than in our country is testified by shaking of hands, while equal love and sympathy, and every tender emotion, glow within us.

I freely acknowledge that on this ground there might be room to hesitate, were it not that salutation by a kiss is founded in nature; it has therefore no dependence on the varying customs or fashions of any country; in every part of the world it is universal on some occasions, not among the whole community, but among near relations and beloved friends, who are always attached to one another, and whose affections, when moved by providential circumstances, must have vent in this way. Any thing more extensive than this becomes of necessity a variable custom, because it is not founded in nature.

There are many instances of salutation in the Word of God which we need only to read, with an appeal to our own hearts, in order to convince us that, were we ourselves to act otherwise in the same circumstances, we should appear to be destitute of human feelings. In some of them, indeed, the artless and unaffected simplicity of the description is so moving, that it is scarcely possible for us to refrain from mingling our tears of grief or joy with those of the interesting persons of whom we read. All is pure and innocent nature—the recital of the historian, the passions which he describes, and the sympathetic feelings of our own hearts. Imagination transports us to the scenes of action. We see the parties, we hear their moving speeches, we admire their expressive looks and gestures, and their demeanour in all respects appears to us the genuine and spontaneous fruit of love. It may be useful to remind you of some of those exquisitely beautiful narratives, which are not only admirable in themselves, but unembellished with fiction, and absolutely true. When our obdurate hearts are thus softened and melted down, they may be rendered more susceptible of those deep impressions which the love of God and the sufferings of the Lord Jesus Christ are in an infinitely higher degree suited to make.

Permit me to begin with the Old Testament, not forgetting, however, carefully to remind you before I proceed, that "whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning."

The meeting of Jacob and Esau, Gen. xxxiii., confirms the fact that salutation is not a fanciful or arbitrary custom, but unalterably founded in nature. After taking every precaution for the safety of his family, Jacob advanced with a slow pace and a trembling heart, conscious that he had formerly given his brother just ground of offence. In his approach to his hostile brother, as he supposed him to be, he showed the utmost deference, bowing himself seven times to the earth. Meanwhile, brotherly affection resumed its throne in the heart of Esau; he could not brook the delay; "he ran to meet Jacob, embraced him, and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept." How brief—how simple—how expressive of that of which a long laboured description would have tried in vain to give us so just and so forcible an idea!

A more affecting account of a similar interview is also given by Moses respecting Joseph and his brethren, Gen. xlv. On the conclusion of the very affectionate and impressive speech of Judah, ch. xliv.—the leading character of which is deep concern for his aged father, most eloquently expressed, because his heart dictated more than his lips could utter, and the im-

petuosity of his spirit raised him above all fear—Joseph could not refrain himself. He cried, "Let every man go out from me. He wept aloud, and the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard. And Joseph said unto his brethren, I am Joseph; doth my father yet live?" Consider what fearful forebodings must then have filled the hearts of those guilty men. So great was their alarm, that they offered no reply. "And his brethren could not answer him, for they were troubled at his presence; and Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you: and they came near,"—not impelled, it would seem, by fraternal love, but because they durst not do otherwise than he commanded. "And he said, I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt;"—stating this, not for the purpose of increasing their alarm, though such must have been its immediate effect; but that he might instantly dissipate all their fears; for he adds, "Now, therefore, be not grieved nor angry with yourselves that ye sold me hither, for God did send me before you to preserve life," &c. "Haste you and go up to my father, and say unto him, Thus saith thy son Joseph, God hath made me lord of all Egypt; come down unto me, tarry not; and thou shalt dwell in the land of Goshen, thou and thy children, and thy children's children," &c.

After delivering to them this gracious message, abounding with the most natural and energetic expressions of filial attachment, he still observed in them a mixture of astonishment and admiration, of grief and terror. They were like men that dreamed, and they remained speechless. Therefore, in the most affectionate and condescending, as well as ingenuous and earnest manner, he assured them that he was really Joseph, that Joseph could forgive, or even in a sense excuse their shocking crime, and that all his promises would be faithfully performed. "And behold your eyes see, and the eyes of my brother Benjamin, (who knew him best,) that it is my mouth that speaketh unto you." There is in these words a degree of kindness and of anxiety to relieve their troubled souls, which no other words can exceed, or even fully explain. This must be left to your own understanding and feelings, if you have hearts in any degree resembling the heart of Joseph.

Still they needed something more than kindness, verbally expressed, to convince them that Joseph was their best and truest friend; for after this assurance, accompanied, we must suppose, with every outward mark of that benignity which reigned within, not a word dropped from the lips of any of them. Even intrepid and eloquent Judah had not yet regained his confidence; he could not so much as tell his affectionate brother with what joy he would communicate to his father the

heart-reviving message, nor how greatly this would contribute to renew his strength, and to smooth the rugged path of his declining years. But what should be this additional proof of love, after Joseph had exhausted all his store? For it may well be presumed, that they knew not what would give them full relief. Think it not a trifle when I say, it was a kiss of love. "And he fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck, and wept, and Benjamin wept on his neck. Moreover he kissed all his brethren, and wept upon them." Their broken hearts were then healed, and their mouths were opened; for "*after that* his brethren talked with him;" and no doubt the conversation would be interesting in a high degree, and the chief speaker, I dare say, was Joseph their brother, whom they sold into Egypt, but without any farther reference to that atrocious deed.

Having dwelt so long on the first avowal of Joseph's filial and fraternal love, I shall now, with more brevity, remind you of similar occurrences regarding him and his family. His first interview with his father is simply told, Gen. xlvi. 29, 30, from which it appears that he instantly obeyed the message brought him by Judah from his anxious father, intimating his expected arrival in Egypt: "And Joseph made ready his chariot, and went to meet Israel his father, to Goshen, and presented himself to him; and he fell on his neck, and wept on his neck a good while." The satisfaction of the aged patriarch is likewise most energetically expressed: "And Israel said unto Joseph, Now let me die since I have seen thy face, because thou art yet alive." A display of reciprocal affection, which, in few words, lays open to us the hearts of both the parties!

The two sons of Joseph also, when he brought them to his father to receive his blessing, obtained from the dying patriarch the same token of his love, when he was scarcely able to "strengthen himself so as to sit upon the bed," Gen. xlviii. 10. "Joseph brought them near unto him, and he kissed them, and embraced them." He did not merely kiss them; he clasped them in his withered arms, and pressed them to his bosom, the seat of love, which very old age had not diminished!

After the venerable patriarch had ceased to be conscious of the kind attentions paid to him by his beloved Joseph, when he had gathered up his feet into the bed, and yielded up the ghost, Joseph fell on his father's face, and wept upon him, and kissed him. At this time he fulfilled the promise which God had made to Israel, Gen. xlvi. 4.: "And Joseph shall put his hands upon thine eyes." This, however, did not suffice. The

bleeding heart of Joseph caused a flood of tears, and prompted him to kiss even the lifeless remains of his beloved father!

If you would be instructed and gratified by a singular display of paternal, filial, and fraternal love, read and consider well the history of Joseph. You might search all the annals of the world, were it possible, without being able to find, in profane history, or romance, or fable, so just and so interesting an encomium on all the charities of father, son, and brother. The picture is so true to nature, that its aspect is recognised by every attentive eye, and awakens the sensibility of every feeling heart. No eulogy, however, is pronounced upon Joseph by the sacred historian; he gives merely a simple narrative of authentic facts, leaving the construction which ought to be put upon them to correspondent feelings in our own breasts, aided by reason, and conceived by the light of nature, and above all, by the revealed will of God. This character of the narratives by inspired men, which is general throughout the Scriptures, I think fully justifies my urgent plea in favour of the pure and uncorrupted feelings of nature. Had we been so formed as to be *necessarily* in danger of falling into great mistakes, the good or evil implied in those narratives would have been clearly stated. Why then, it may be said, do we often err? The answer is short and conclusive, Because we depart from nature. It is the principal aggravation of some of the most shocking crimes, that those who commit them do "that which is against nature." There is a very wide distinction between innocent and criminal nature, which is not sufficiently regarded, and in many instances the latter is the abuse of the former. But if every thing which is natural to man were opposite to the law of God, then it would be sinful to love our parents or our children, as it would be also to eat, or walk, or sleep! In the excess of these we often sin; but such propensities and actions, abstractly considered, are altogether blameless.

It so happens that all the persons hitherto mentioned who were engaged in the mutual offices and endearments of love, were males. But I now embrace with cheerfulness an opportunity of bringing forward a similar instance, which is highly creditable to the female sex, as it exemplifies, in the case of ordinary persons, reduced for the time to a state of abject poverty, all the gentleness, and kind sympathies, and tender feelings which peculiarly adorn the female character. It is not my design, however, to attempt any embellishment of the simple narrative, for this could have no effect but to spoil its native beauty.

At a time when there was a famine in the land of Israel, Elimelech, with his wife Naomi, and their two sons Mahlon and Chilion, went to sojourn in the country of Moab. Naomi's husband died. Her two sons married Orpah and Ruth, daughters of Moab; and in process of time Mahlon and Chilion died also. Naomi, thus bereaved of her husband and her two sons, arose with her daughters-in-law to return to her own country, "for she had heard that the Lord had visited his people in giving them bread." Here were three desolate widows, having no human protector nor any guide, so far advanced on their journey to the land of Judah.

Naomi, recollecting her destitute and forlorn condition, thus affectingly addressed her daughters-in-law: "Go, return each to her mother's house: the Lord deal kindly with you, as ye have dealt with the dead, and with me. The Lord grant you that ye may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband. Then she kissed them: and they lifted up their voice, and wept." At first, however, both of them protested that they would not leave her. Then she said, with stronger expressions of maternal love, "Turn again, my daughters; why will ye go with me? Are there yet any more sons in my womb that they may be your husbands? Turn again, my daughters; why will ye go with me? go your way; for I am too old to have an husband, &c. Nay, my daughters; for it grieveth me much for your sakes, that the hand of the Lord is gone out against me." What expressions of maternal tenderness! From the whole of Naomi's second speech, and especially her concluding words, it appears that she regarded their happiness more than her own. Her daughters "lifted up their voice, and wept again; and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law; but Ruth clave unto her." Naomi took leave of them both when she saluted them, and now Orpah in the same manner bade farewell to her mother-in-law.

As yet there seems to be no difference between Orpah and Ruth, except that the latter still clave to Naomi. But it will appear in the sequel, that Ruth was immovably fixed and determined in her choice, not merely on account of her strong, and generous, and grateful attachment to Naomi; but because she feared the God of Israel, and would no more live among the heathen though they were her kindred.

With a view, it would seem, to try her on this point, Naomi said, "Behold, thy sister-in-law is gone back unto her people, and unto her gods: return thou after thy sister-in-law." And Ruth said, with exquisite sensibility and undaunted courage, "Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee; for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou

lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy god my god. Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me." Besides the exquisitely tender affection to Naomi expressed in these words, to the extent of sharing with her the fatigues and perils of the journey, her mean lodging, her homely fare, and at last a place by her side in "the house appointed for all living," she expressly avows her choice of the people and the God of Naomi, and uses the language of those who feared the Lord in Israel, to show that her purpose was unalterable.

That Ruth was not only a proselyte to the Jewish religion, but also one of those who "looked for redemption in Israel," farther appears from the testimony of Boaz, ii. 11, 12, "It hath been fully showed me all that thou hast done unto thy mother-in-law since the death of thine husband; and how thou hast left thy father and thy mother, and the land of thy nativity, and art come unto a people whom thou knewest not heretofore. The Lord recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings thou are come to trust." This prayer was answered, and so far as it related to the temporal condition of Ruth, Boaz himself was made the instrument of fulfilling it. And *he* also obtained a full reward; for "the price of a virtuous woman" (as he denominates Ruth) "is far above rubies. The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her. Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her." But these encomiums in their full extent are exclusively due to a woman "that feareth the Lord," Prov. xxxi. In this case, however, they are justly applied, without any other limitation than is always prescribed by a consciousness of the imperfection of every human being.

Nor did the kind, the disinterested, and motherly Naomi, lose her reward. She obtained her highest wish in the consummation of her daughter's happiness, to which her prudent advice had eminently contributed. And with regard to herself, when Ruth bare a son, "the women said to Naomi, Blessed be the Lord, who hath not left thee this day without a kinsman, that his name may be famous in Israel. And he shall be unto thee a restorer of thy life, and a nourisher of thine old age; for thy daughter-in-law, who loveth thee, who is better to thee than seven sons, hath borne him." And so deeply were her neighbours interested in her welfare, that they kept out of view the name of Boaz, whom, nevertheless, they greatly respected, and thus exultingly intimated the truth, "There is a son born *to Naomi*." But this she well deserved; for, besides all her

former kindness to Ruth, she now acted the part of a mother to the son of her daughter-in-law, "She took the child, and laid it in her bosom, and became nurse to it." No complaint was made of the excessive toil which this would occasion to an elderly woman who had waded through a long course of adversity, because Naomi's service was a labour of love.

Such is the conclusion of this wonderful scene, which is remarkable for another circumstance, unknown to the actors in it—that this son of Boaz and Ruth was destined to be the grandfather of David, king of Israel. And here it may be remarked that the history of Naomi, and Ruth, and Boaz, with all its moving circumstances, was merely incidental; for the leading object of the historian was to give an accurate account of the house and lineage of David, from whom the great Messiah was to descend.

The narrative gives abundant evidence that these three eminent persons, Naomi, Boaz, and Ruth, were fearers of God; and a number of others who congratulated Boaz and Naomi, as well as the servants of the former, seem to have been of the same description. They are to us also eminent examples of love, with its soothing attributes of constancy in adverse circumstances, sympathetic feeling, benevolent wishes, fervent prayers, active services, and joyful acclamations when happiness is restored to suffering friends.

A more full account, perhaps, than was necessary, has been given of the incidents in this history, and of those in a former one of a similar kind. But it is pleasant to dwell upon them; and every circumstance which has been narrated, tends to illustrate the subject in hand, as it teaches us in what state of mind salutation is not only a duty, but a natural and most gratifying token of love.

I now request your attention to the examples of salutation which are recorded in the New Testament, premising that the whole of them took place in like manner on particular occasions, which evidently called for this expression of love.

The parable of the prodigal son, Luke xv., although it is not to be considered as a relation of an historical fact, yet gives a just representation of what would actually happen when such a father should meet with such a son, under all the circumstances narrated in the parable. If any doubt remain, I appeal to the hearts of parents; the compassionate mother, and the stronger-minded, but relenting father, will corroborate my assertion. Nay, every attentive reader who possesses human feelings, will commiserate the lost condition of the son, and applaud the tender mercy of the father, participating with him in his inexpressible joy. Does not every generous and

sympathetic heart condemn the selfish disposition of the invidious elder son, and admire the conciliating and merciful treatment which he also met with from his injured father?

The great design of the parable is, to give us a most wonderful and overpowering display of the infinite compassion and mercy of our heavenly Father towards his rebellious children, whose guilt has rendered them utterly wretched and forlorn. But, in our just conception of this, we surely cannot be aided by paying no respect to the letter of the parable, or by considering it a mere fiction. If it had no spiritual meaning, it would still be a more faithful and a more affecting description of human wretchedness, filial anguish, and paternal love, than any which ever came from the pen of a human writer.

Is it not then an unquestionable fact that a kind, and merciful, and tender-hearted father, on seeing his returning prodigal, overwhelmed with misery and want, but giving signs of deep repentance, would act as Jesus says this father did? "But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him." After this, he began his humiliating and just confession, in which he seems to have been interrupted by his overjoyed father saying to his servants, "Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found." It is not more evident that in all these particulars human nature, in its best attitude, is described, and not overdrawn, than it is, that such a flow of compassion, and mercy, and paternal love and joy, must be gratified by saluting the beloved object; and that if this had been omitted, the wretched son would not have been fully convinced that he had found grace in the sight of his father. The latter is represented as saluting his son in the same complacential and impassioned manner as we have seen exemplified in the history of Jacob and Esau, Joseph and his brethren, and Joseph and his father, "He fell on his neck, and kissed him."

If the father himself is supposed to have experienced the blessedness of Divine forgiveness, does this weaken the force of my argument? Was he thus obliged to show nothing but calm sentimental forgiveness towards his son, and to receive him with stoical apathy? To affirm this would be a complete denial both of the letter and spirit of the parable. Does Christianity extinguish, in place of regulating, the feelings of human nature, or at least repress them in all matters which have any thing to do with religion? Were this admitted, there would be an end of religion itself, in which the sanctified pas-

sions of our nature bear so great a sway; under this restriction, we could duly perform no religious act whatever, nor appear as "living stones" in God's spiritual building. And, were we to be occupied in our religious services as mere machines, the Christian salutation would not then be worth speaking about, it would be divested of all its meaning!

An example of salutation, under the impulse of genuine and fervent love, is recorded, Acts xx. 37, 38. The parties were the elders of the Church at Ephesus, and the Apostle Paul. This eminent apostle was now taking leave of them, after residing among them during the period of three years. He addressed them in the most affectionate manner, recounting his own incessant "labours night and day, with tears;" reminding them that "he had not shunned to declare unto them all the counsel of God;" informing them that "they should see his face no more;" that they would be exposed to imminent danger from "grievous wolves entering in among them, and from false teachers of their own body;" protesting that "he had been free from covetousness," and that he had given them an example of industry and of bounty; beseeching them to remember that Jesus said, "it is more blessed to give than to receive." He also solemnly commanded them to take heed to themselves, and to the flock over which the Holy Spirit had made them overseers; to feed the Church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood, and to watch against the dangers of which he had forewarned them. In the foresight of these "he commended them to God, and to the word of his grace; and kneeled down and prayed with them all."

This zealous and affectionate concern for their spiritual welfare, produced in their souls the most lively emotions of love and gratitude, and also of sympathy on account of the "bonds and afflictions which he had told them awaited him in every city," as well as the deepest sorrow and regret in the view of instantly losing so valuable a teacher, who had "exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of them, as a father doth his children." They all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck, and kissed him, "sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more." The narrative is not yet finished; for the historian adds, with beautiful simplicity, "And they accompanied him unto the ship"—not attempting to inform us with what reluctance they tore themselves from him whom they so ardently loved and venerated, nor how many additional tears were shed when the vessel sailed, and carried him out of their sight! There is no instance of salutation among the dearest friends, recorded in the Word of God, which exceeds this in the kindness of the

expressions of sincere and fervent love. Joseph himself could do no more than fall on the necks of his brethren, and kiss them, and shed a flood of tears!

Scriptural narratives alone are here compared with each other. But if (as has been formerly noticed) these are decidedly more excellent than the best of all human compositions, let it be confessed, that "He that knoweth what is in man," guided the pens of the sacred historians; and let no vain man suppose, (whatever may be the extent of his ingenuity, his talents, and his learning,) that he can give a better display, either of the passions which afflict, or of those which solace, the human mind.

It is true, indeed, that the same degree of tender emotions cannot take place on all occasions; and the great variety of natural tempers and dispositions prohibit us from expecting that every person will be equally affected by the most moving and interesting scenes. But something less or more of this kind, which always depends on providential occurrences, seems essential to the Christian salutation, if we wish to avoid reducing it to a mere form. Three instances of less remarkable occasions will be found in the history of this same Apostle, Acts xviii. 22; xxi. 7 and 19. In each of these cases he saluted his brethren on seeing them after a time of absence; and, in the last instance, he introduced himself to James and all the elders, by giving his pledge of his Christian love, before proceeding to "declare what things God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry."

So far as I recollect, the New Testament contains no other instances of salutation which can possibly be considered as examples to Christians; and I am sure that none of them warrant the practice of saluting by way of form.

This second head, besides being too long, may perhaps be considered as merely a continuation of the first. In some respects, indeed, it illustrates the nature and import of the precept in the text. But all the examples which have this effect, at the same time clearly show, that no other sign of love can supply the place of mutual salutation; and that, on some occasions, we are irresistibly led to it by the constitution of our nature, as it came from the hands of God. Therefore the only specious cavil (for it is not an argument which can be brought against a commandment so plain and so often repeated, namely, that of giving any token of love which may be most prevalent at the time, ought to be considered as obedience to the apostolic injunction) is completely refuted, leaving Christians under an express obligation to "salute one another with an holy kiss."

DISCOURSE II.

"SALUTE ONE ANOTHER WITH AN HOLY KISS."—ROM. XVI. 16.

III. THE next object of inquiry is, on what occasions are we called to render obedience to this precept?

Were I confined to answer this in two words, I would just say, Follow nature. Many words, however, have already been employed in bringing to your recollection a variety of examples recorded in the Holy Scriptures for our learning; and these show very clearly the nature of those occasions which demand of us this tender and delicate pledge of our Christian love. Thus has the second head of my discourse trespassed both upon the first and third, which, if it was unavoidable, will be a sufficient apology for its length. But I shall now state more particularly some of those which appear to me proper occasions, and the greater part of which are of frequent occurrence. Among these I would mention a state of severe bodily distress —other great and overwhelming calamities—recovery from deep distress—escape from imminent impending danger—when we take farewell of brethren going to a distant place—when we joyfully meet with them after long absence—when we receive a member into the church, and partake of the joy which is in heaven over one sinner that repenteth—still more, when a prodigal, who has strayed from the fold of Christ, returns and gladdens our hearts—at the settlement of the grounds of quarrel or offence, when the parties are reconciled—and at, or some time before, the solemn hour of death, when we take a long and last farewell, in the hope of meeting our departing brother or sister before the throne of God.

Another occasion, which would be more general, and would occur more frequently than any of the former, seems to be hinted at, or perhaps expressed not very doubtfully, in Luke vii., where Jesus speaks thus to Simon: "I entered into thine house; thou gavest me no kiss;" from which it may be supposed, that it was then customary for the master of the house thus to receive his guests, at least those of them whom he highly respected. I have no desire, however, to introduce this practice; it would be very liable to misconstruction and to abuse, and also to the objection that the general practice of the world is no rule to Christians, especially when they use the

most tender expression of love for the purpose of showing politeness and respect.

Now, it appears to me, that formal and periodical salutation wants some things which are essential to a kiss of love. When the wise man says, Ecclesiastes iii., among a variety of similar remarks, "There is a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing," no one surely can suppose that he means to recommend *fixed periods* for each of these, an idea which is totally inapplicable to every one of the *times* there mentioned. His design, then, is to show that there are *fit occasions* for embracing, and this is the just explanation of all his other times, except the birth and death of human beings, over which man has no control. It seems equally improper to say that there is a time to embrace, when nothing has occurred which can dispose the mind to it, as it would be to affirm that there is a time to love, when nothing lovely is presented to our view, or a time to hate, when we see no hateful object either mentally or externally.

But it may be thought that I have recommended more occasions of salutation than are exemplified in the Scripture, where it would seem we find nothing except the meeting and the departure of friends. There is, however, the instance of Jacob embracing his grandsons, and of Joseph kissing the dead corpse of his father, and it cannot be doubted that in many other cases this expression of love was given and received though it has not been mentioned. Naomi and Orpah saluted twice. Naomi and Ruth, according to the narrative, only once. But who, on account of this silence of the historian, will affirm positively that Naomi did not with increased emotions of complacential love and tenderness embrace her beloved daughter a second time, after hearing her express in such moving terms her final resolution to cleave to her, and to her people, and to her god? Let nature speak, and then objectors will be dumb. Or who can think that the Apostle Paul did not salute with an holy kiss the twelve disciples whom he met at Ephesus, and whom he had never seen before, and could not therefore be moved by recollections of former happy interviews? On many other occasions, too, when the fact is not recorded, he could not fail to have given this pledge of love to his brethren in the faith of Jesus. These you will truly say are only suppositions, however probable they may be. Well, then, my argument is, that *all* the occasions which I have mentioned are precisely *of the same nature* with the examples which are recorded in the Old and the New Testament; and, which is still more to be regarded, *every* emotion of the soul which can be excited by the proposed occasions, is strikingly apparent in some of the

Scriptural instances, particularly those of Joseph, Naomi, the prodigal's father, and the elders of the church at Ephesus. It may here be remarked also, that if salutations were given generally on the recurrence of the one-half of those occasions, this duty would be more frequently practised among us, and more suitably to its true spirit and design, than it has hitherto been.

While I speak of salutation in the church at a set time on the Lord's day as formal and periodical, and call this a cold and distant form, permit me to caution you against supposing that I am averse to form when it is Scriptural, and as in that case it must always do when it tends to cherish the spirit of true religion. Without all the instituted forms which indeed are few and simple, we could not worship God according to his will, nor follow the pattern of the primitive churches, who were commanded to "do all things decently, and in order."

My objection, in the present case, is not against form, which must be in whatever way the salutation be conducted, and the form or manner of it ought always to be inoffensive, cautious, and respectful, as well as kind and affectionate. But my objection lies against a form which is neither commanded nor exemplified in the Scriptures, and because it is unsuitable to the nature of salutation. To say in answer to all this, that we may likewise become formal and lukewarm in observing the Lord's Supper, is reasoning which, I affirm, has no connexion whatever with the point in hand. The Lord's Supper is a Divine form; it sets before us every thing which ought most deeply to affect our souls, and, if become formal, the blame is wholly ours. The form of salutation of which I complain, is, on the contrary, such as *must* render us formal whether we will or no, because it wants that which is necessary to give it vitality.

Or perhaps my sentiment may be better expressed by saying, that we must be culpable lovers of form *before* we can give our consent to salute one another formally at stated times. *To do it at all in this way*, is that which I represent as an object of censure; and I entreat you to recollect that none of my representations have a respect to the danger of its becoming an empty form by frequent repetition. If it were a Divine form, I should think it highly criminal to make such an objection, because this would be an attempt to "charge God foolishly."

In the contrast which has been drawn between the Lord's Suppper and weekly salutation, let me beseech you to mark well the vast superiority of Divine to human forms in religion. Those which God hath appointed, uniformly and directly tend to warm the heart and set in motion all its amiable and devout affections; while those of man's devising, chill the soul and im-

prison all its faculties. Either this or the opposite extreme of soaring to the heights of irrational and enthusiastic fervour, is naturally produced by forms which the wisdom of man prescribes without the sanction of Divine authority.

As a farther evidence of the truth of my affirmation, I may be permitted to remark, that those who plead for periodical salutation, pass slightly over all the tender emotions with which it ought to be accompanied, and many of the instances recorded in Scripture, which are amiable and affecting in the highest degree. But this they must either do, or quit their plea in favour of a mode of salutation, which can only be consistently maintained on the principle of denying that any occurrence in the course of providence, ought to dispose, or to indispose us for observing this token of fervent love. Not that I plead for the necessity of impassioned feelings in every case. There are in the Scriptures, as has been already noticed, instances of that sort, and also of a more ordinary kind; but NONE *in which we cannot perceive that which tends in some degree to call forth the kind emotions of a loving heart.*

IV. Another task which I have imposed upon myself is, to give some replies to the leading arguments for periodical salutation in churches.

First, It is pleaded that the commandment makes this duty mutual, "*salute one another*," and is addressed to churches; therefore it ought to be observed simultaneously in churches, for thus only can it be mutual, or general, or suited to the precept—"Greet *all* the brethren—salute *every* saint in Christ Jesus." Nay, so far has this plea been carried, that some of those who urge it, have affirmed that there is *no other way* in which we can obey this precept in the sense intended by the Apostles.

How then do they certainly know that the mode which they have adopted, and no other, is the will of God? Can they affirm that their view is *expressed* in any text of Scripture, or that it is supported by the authority of any one example? The commandment is nowhere given in such terms as these, Salute one another on the Lord's day, or at fixed periods when ye are assembled together; nor is this duty included among the standing ordinances of the house of God, Acts ii. 42; nor do we find, on appealing to the New Testament, that salutation in this way ever was observed, either in an orderly or a disorderly manner, in any of the apostolic churches.

And by what means can the examples which are on record be nullified? Will it be maintained that the Apostle Paul and his brethren at Miletus did not "salute one another with an

holy kiss?" or that, although they did this, yet they were not obeying the Divine precept? Might we not rather say that it never was more completely obeyed? For surely this Apostle knew well how to obey a precept which he had already delivered in writing to one church, and which he afterwards enjoined in his epistle to four other churches.

Again, why is not salutation mutual if it take place any where? It is more strictly mutual, wheresoever it may be attended to, than almost any thing else; for without two persons it cannot be observed at all—*in every case* they salute one another, and this is done at the same moment by both parties, which is not the case with respect to other mutual duties.

The precept in the text differs not in the smallest degree from the uniform style used in the epistles, and by our Lord himself, when the duties enjoined are incumbent upon all. These are very numerous, and I shall recapitulate a few of them. "Love, exhort, comfort, edify, teach, and admonish *one another*. Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep, (or sympathize with *one another* in all your joys and griefs.) Bear ye *one another's* burdens. Use hospitality *one to another*. By love serve *one another*. Ye ought also to wash *one another's* feet."

These are all mutual or reciprocal duties, enjoined upon churches, and upon every individual in the churches, whose bounden duty it is to obey them, according to the ability which God giveth, and as opportunities may occur. Yet none of us require that, on the Lord's day, every one should speak to the edification of the whole; that something should be done by all, expressive of their fellow-feeling, their hospitality, and their active services of love; or that each of us should wash his brother's feet. If, however, it be incumbent on us to salute after this form, we are equally bound in the same public and social manner to fulfil all those other duties.

Let it not be supposed, however, that I am against salutation in churches, nor that my proposal has any tendency to prevent this. No less than ten fit occasions have been mentioned, of which only the first and last, and in some cases the second, cannot occur in our church assemblies. When therefore, brethren, I request you to embrace on at least seven opportunities in place of one which does not appear to me a fit occasion, you can with no propriety say that I am unfriendly to public salutation, though I disapprove of that which is periodical, and unaccompanied with any circumstance which renders the time appointed a time to embrace.

But it is said, salutation confers nothing, and is valuable only as a token and pledge of fervent love; it alone, therefore,

is capable of being observed in a formal manner, for in no case is it in itself more than a mere form, which may be either a sign of friendship, or the deceitful kiss of an enemy.

The remark is just, but in my opinion very ill applied. If a kiss of charity bestow no favour, and be a mere outward expression of love, surely on that very account we ought to feel, that we are under a more deep and solemn obligation to observe it only in such circumstances as have a tendency to produce lively affection, and thus to make the heart true to the most delicate expression of love.

I beseech you, my brethren, to consider how far we may be led astray even when the object in view is obedience to an acknowledged Divine precept, and when our motive is a sincere desire to do the will of God. The facts stated, namely, that the duty is mutual, and that it is enjoined on churches, are unquestionably true; but the conclusions drawn from them are quite unfounded. Yet such is the influence of a fond attachment to an imposing form, which is easily and instantaneously observed, that many persons have not only adopted this form, but think it so essential to the duty of mutual salutation, that, yielding to the occasional impulse of nature, and proceeding according to the uniform tenor of Scriptual example, is by them accounted nothing in comparison of a standing form, nowhere exemplified in the Word of God!

Periodical salutation in churches is very far indeed from being *general*, as you shall afterwards hear.

Second, All other modes of salutation, it is argued, are practised by the world; more is expected from us; we stand in the closest connexion with each other, and it would be quite unsuitable if we did not observe this token of love in such a manner as to distinguish us from those who have no centre of union except earthly ties. Jesus hath said, "What do ye more than others?

With respect to the world at large, their love and hatred are certainly no examples to us; "they hate the good, and love the evil; and they are hateful, and hating one another," as we ourselves also were before we knew the truth. But the persons of whom I have all along spoken, were not the world in general; they were near relatives and beloved friends, the far greater part of whom also were the true fearers of God; indeed only two of the examples admit of a doubt whether *both parties* were persons of that description. We are expressly commanded not to be conformed to this world; and if we be Christians indeed, we must in many respects love what they hate, and hate what they love. In relation to them, our only care should be that we follow not their pernicious ways, and that we do not

suffer even the decent and respectable part of the world, to excel us in any thing which is truly praiseworthy.

But shall we, therefore, pay no regard to the natural affection of parents and children, and brethren and sisters, and please ourselves with the false supposition that our Christian love is far superior in degree to the love of kindred? Happy should I be, could I say with truth that they do not far excel us. Observe, however, that I am not considering to what extent the disciples of Christ *ought to love one another*, but merely to what extent they *actually do love* in this imperfect state. They who profess more love to their fellow-Christians than the most tender-hearted parents exercise towards their children, or than affectionate children of the same family exercise towards each other, know not their own hearts, and thus are guilty of vainglorious boasting.

Why are Christians denominated "brethren—the family of God—sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty?" Why are the collective body of disciples termed "the brotherhood?" Why are we taught to entreat old men as fathers, the younger men as brethren; the elder women as mothers, and the younger as sisters? The love which we are commanded to exercise towards the people of God, is usually called "brotherly love;' and when an apostle would show us *how* we ought to love, he gives this direction, "Love as brethren." The same apostle terms this love "brotherly kindness;" and another apostle uses a similar, but a still more endearing expression, "Be kindly affectioned one to another;" which is explained by the words that follow, "with brotherly love," that is, the kindness of an affectionate brother. And what is still more remarkable and striking than any thing which has been mentioned, is the description which Jesus gave of his disciples. When he was informed that "his mother and his brethren stood without, desiring to speak with him," "Who is my mother, and who are my brethren? And he stretched out his hands towards his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! for whosoever shall do the will of my Father who is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother."

The love which Christians owe to each other, is therefore the same which generally prevails among the nearest connexions in life, and is accompanied with the same complacency and delight; but it flows from motives altogether different, and is enforced by infinitely higher examples. These are—"the love of God even our Father, who hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation, and good hope through grace"—and "the love of Christ, who hath loved us and given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God, for a sweet-smelling savour."

Be assured, then, my brethren, that we are destitute of Christian love if we have no emotions and feelings similar to those of the nearest and dearest friends, and if these are incapable of being excited on such occasions as would move the hearts of fathers, mothers, brethren, and sisters. Let it be duly considered also, that natural affection, to which the love of Christians is in the Scriptures so often assimilated, never can prompt the most affectionate family to institute a periodical form of salutation. They would consider this as an unmeaning external show, and the mere proposal of it would be treated as an impeachment of the sincerity and fervency of their love. It is evident, therefore, that with all our pretensions to do *more* than the world, we actually do *less* than is done by those of them whose example we ought to follow. A periodical sign of love does not prove itself to be a token of "brotherly kindness;" it resembles more the general salutation, by which friendship is or may be testified in civil society, though there is nothing so formal either in families or in the world at large.

Do I then propose any thing more or less than the Word of God enjoins, when I request you to "salute as brethren, with the kindness of an affectionate brother—to salute the aged men as fathers, the young men as brethren; the elder women as mothers, and the younger women as sisters, with all purity?" —not with the cold indifference of those who can scarcely, in any sense, be called friends, but with love resembling the love of kindred. A practice opposite to that which I recommend, is not merely wrong in itself; it tends to wear off from our minds a just impression of what is meant by the Christian brotherhood, the complacency and the fervour of brotherly love.

Third, It has been said, to decline public salutation at stated times, may lead to the disuse of it. This is always a remembrancer, and of itself perpetuates the practice.

Would not this, if it were a just argument, prove that we ought to exemplify every mutual duty formally on the Lord's day? And if this be impossible, as it certainly is, why should one mutual duty, not expressed in less general terms than many others, be alone considered as obligatory once a-week, or more liable to be neglected than a great variety of other duties, some of which have been already mentioned? Not surely because the external sign of love is of greater importance than love itself, and all its active and beneficial services, without which there is no sincerity, nor any legitimate meaning, in the kiss of charity. Our deficiency in all those duties is readily admitted, and we need much to pray that "the Lord would make us to increase and abound in love one towards another, and towards all men;" but it is more than doubtful if we can be aided in

this by a constrained and unnatural manner of summoning our attention to them, or by converting them into lifeless forms.

There is no reason, however, to suppose, that observing the salutation on those other occasions which correspond with its nature, would be less apt to perpetuate the practice. No person who is capable of thinking, can really be of this opinion; though he may suspect, and perhaps not unjustly, that such occasions will often be neglected. The occurrences which appear to me suited to dispose us for spontaneous salutation, are numerous; we often meet with them; and if fervent love prevail among us, these will be cheerfully embraced, and salutation will become far more general and frequent than it now is. If otherwise, it will be an empty form, in whatever way it may be observed; and this is always to be dreaded when there is any other constraint than that of love. To be consistent, the argument ought rather to have been *against* frequent salutation.

I may now ask, would not periodical salutation, partial and defective as it must be, satisfy many, to the exclusion of that which is natural and rational, and which agrees with Scriptural precedents? But if our love were as fervent as that of the persons whose example we ought to follow, it would break through all stated regulations and forms; nay, these would utterly be contemned. Nature would teach us to salute on proper occasions, and love would constrain us to obey—love! the most amiable of all principles, the distinguishing characteristic of which is, that, while it cannot be forced, it gently rules with unlimited sway, and with the entire consent of those who feel its influence.

Fourth, Primitive example has been referred to as an argument for periodical salutation. In the writings of those who are called the Fathers, there are several testimonies in favour of it. At the time of observing the Lord's Supper, after the prayers and thanksgivings, and before partaking of the elements, the brethren saluted those on each side of them with a kiss of charity.

I am not disposed to call in question the fact that the primitive Christians, under the guidance of the fathers, did actually thus salute one another, nor that the practice was introduced at an early period. But my answer is, that the evidence which this testimony affords, is not primitive enough; for nothing short of apostolic authority ought to satisfy the minds of those who now desire to know the will of God. It is a very common opinion that human tradition confirms revealed truth, and many who profess to believe the Scriptures are happy when they can find this prop of their faith in the ancient writings of

either the religious or profane. But this is a great and dangerous mistake; when a true believer suffers it to pervert his judgment, which may happen, it then cannot be said of him, "great is thy faith." In matters of religion, the traditions of men are nothing unless they be confirmed by the Word of God. But the latter stands in no need of confirmation, and there is more evil in this thought than is generally perceived. If tradition agree with the Scriptures, it is well, and we ought to rejoice that the author, and those who adhere to him, maintained the doctrine of the Word of God. But here we must stop; God alone can confirm the Word which he hath spoken.

It will be said, however, that all that is wanted is, to confirm an opinion of the *meaning* of certain texts, or rather an opinion respecting the *time and manner* of obeying a commandment, which is abundantly plain in itself. But does not this again imply that the Word of God is deficient, because, though it clearly points out our duty, yet it withholds from us the means of knowing how to perform it? And do not those who agree with me in the general principle of rejecting the authority of human tradition, and yet in one respect look to it for support, manifestly show that they themselves do not perceive Divine evidence on their side of the matter in question? They cannot fail to be conscious also, that there is abundance of evidence on the other side; for there is nothing more easily discernible in sacred history, than that which constitutes "a time to embrace;" nor any thing more essential to man than an instinctive sense of this, which regulates every class of mankind except misguided Christians!

The ancient authors who have transmitted to us an account of the practice of Christians in their times, relative to the kiss of charity, are Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Origen, and Chrysostom, the earliest of whom, Justin Martyr, (for I mention them in their order,) wrote about the middle of the second century, and the latest towards the end of the fourth, or in the beginning of the fifth century. Many deviations from the purity and simplicity of the Christian profession had taken place at, and before the first of those periods, as some of you well know. Without giving you any general account of these, I shall only mention one, as it is sufficient for my purpose, besides their periodical salutation itself, is singled out because it is immediately connected with the present subject, and avowed by the authors whom I have mentioned.

The Christians of those days, when they met to observe the Lord's Supper, before which they saluted each other, made an avowed separation of the sexes; for this purpose they arranged themselves on opposite sides of the house, and no brother was

permitted to give this token of Christian love to a sister! This I consider as a practical denial of an essential and a most joyful truth; that "there is neither male nor female in Christ Jesus." Yet afterwards, in the times of Chrysostom, they seem to have excluded females altogether, by confining the public salutation to the male part of their churches! Who knows to what extent they might have carried these Anti-christian (distinctions?) or separations? The text to which I refer is in Gal. iii. 28. "There is neither Jew nor Greek; there is neither bond nor free; there is neither male nor female, for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." Nothing more is necessary to show how little dependence we ought to have on the example of Christians after the time of the Apostles. They were not in this case under the same temptation to separate "Jews and Greeks, bond and free;" but if some other favourite innovation had interfered with their visible unity, it is impossible to say what they might have been disposed to do.

V. In conclusion, I have now to express the hope which I fully entertain, that my brethren in the faith of Jesus, will give heed to what I have said, so far as it may have been confirmed by the doctrine of the Scriptures, and that it will appear to you that periodical salutation in a church, while it professes to be universal, is not even general, and that pretensions to a salutation of the whole church are fanciful and delusive, unworthy of the gravity and simplicity of Christians. Indeed, it is remarkable for nothing more than for its extremely limited diffusion, which could not have been exceeded if the wisdom and ingenuity of man had been employed to make it such. We must therefore go back for its origin as far as the days of Justin Martyr, sixteen hundred and fifty years ago.

But it is to the Scriptures alone that our appeal must be made, and with a candid and teachable disposition to search them, joined with earnest prayer to the Father of lights, the God of love and peace, that he would guide us into all truth, to whom be glory for ever. Amen.

THE END.

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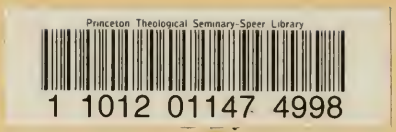
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